

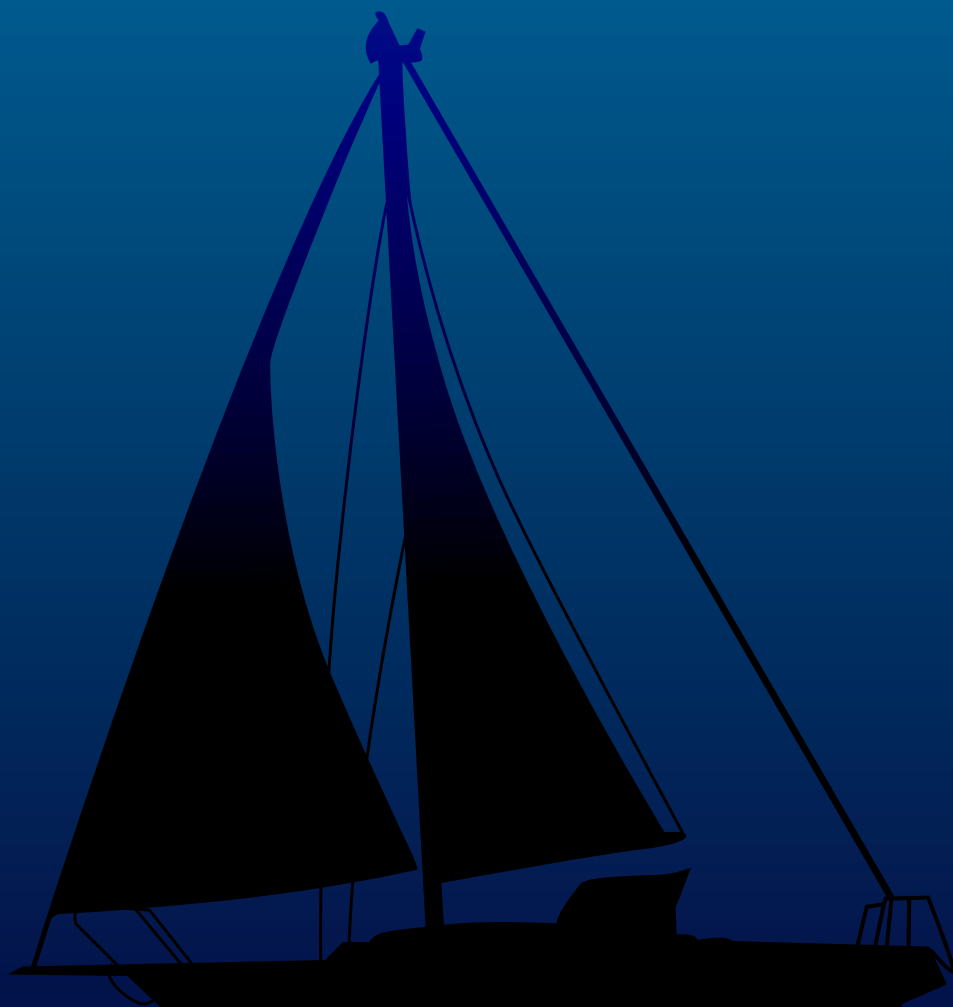


BluAct

Starting up the Blue Economy

NETWORK RESULTS REPORT

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BluAct
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1.0 ABOUT BLUACT



The BluAct Transfer Network is a sustainable urban development initiative that aimed to support an improvement and transfer of a good practice in the field of Blue Growth innovation and entrepreneurship.

The BluAct Transfer Network was supported by the URBACT Programme and comprised a network of 7 European port cities including Piraeus (GR), Mataro (ES), Ostend (BE), Galati (RO), Matosinhos (PT), Burgas (BG) and Salerno (IT).

In the BluAct Transfer Network, Piraeus aimed to share its good practice in Blue Economy entrepreneurship with the other six cities, who 'Transferred' the good practice to their own cities. The project followed the success of the Piraeus' Blue Growth Initiative, an entrepreneurship competition that offers incubation services to local businesses, boosting innovation and job creation.

In transferring the good practice, each partner engaged key stakeholders in their own cities, to form an Urbact Local Support Group that supported the design and implementation of the urban action between 2019 and 2021.



2.0 ABOUT THIS REPORT



This report is a compulsory output of an Urbact Transfer Network. It is designed to reflect the network's trajectory and the key lessons learned from the good practice transfer.

This report builds on the material created in the network, including the content produced by partners along the journey. It includes;

- An introduction to the Good Practice, the city partners and their diversity;
- An explanation of the added value of working in a transnational URBACT network;
- A presentation of the highlights of the journey - successes and challenges;
- A description of why and how the transfer took place;
- A critique of the process the partners went through; and
- Suggestions for the next steps of the involved partner cities.

The final version of this report needs to be ready for dissemination by September 2020, before the BluAct Final Network Event.



3.0 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 six 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.

The five stages of the Blue Growth Initiative each city used to structure the transfer of the Good Practice to their own cities are as follows;

STAGE ONE: Establishment of a strong multi-agency governance structure for overseeing the delivery of the initiative (June – December)

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.

- o **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.

- o **Lobbying & Influence:** On the basis of Piraeus specialisation and excellence and the successful implementation of Blue Growth Initiative, Blue Economy was included as a priority field in the regional smart specialization strategy (RIS3), while Research, Development, and Innovation in Blue Economy is favoured in receiving funding.

- o **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.

STAGE TWO: Competition Preparation (December – February)

During this phase of the delivery of the Blue Growth competition, the city needs to secure the resources to deliver the competition and develop the marketing collateral needed to launch it. The resources needed to deliver the programme may not necessarily cost a fortune. In Piraeus' case, they launched the first competition with very little external funding but relied heavily on in-kind contributions from partners.

- **Securing the resources to deliver the programme and support the entrepreneurs**

In order to offer support to the early stage entrepreneurs that enter the competition, it is important to quickly agree which partners are willing and able to contribute, in terms of support resources and facilities to be used as competition 'prizes'. In the case of Piraeus, they were successful at leveraging the following support into the first Blue Growth competition they organised;

- o **Project Management.** The Municipality of Piraeus co-ordinated the implementation of the first Blue Growth initiative, providing overall project management support to the programme.

- o **Incubation Provision:** Aephoria.net is a business incubation program for start-up companies operating in Greece that provided participating teams with business and sustainability education that enabled them to create scalable businesses and develop a sustainable business model.

- o **Marketing & Delivery Partners:** In the first year of the competition, this included influential organisations like Athens Information Technology (AIT), the Ministry of Shipping and the Aegean, the Federation of Hellenic Associations of Young Entrepreneurs (OESYNE), who provided a range of support, from potential applicants, promotional support, venues, influential speakers/event hosts etc.

o **Media Sponsors:** In addition to these marketing partners the first BGI also partnered with Media Sponsors, nooz.gr, epixeiro.gr, foititikanea.gr and ελculture.

o **Prize Sponsors:** In the first year of operation, contributors included Piraeus Port Authority (OLP), Capital Ship Management, Celestyal Cruises, Central Markets and Fishery Organization (OKAA).

o **Supporters:** included Athens Tech College, Business College of Athens-Economic College of Athens (BCA), European Parliament's Office in Greece.

• Pre-launch preparation

Once the key partner contributions to deliver the Blue Growth Initiative have been secured and agreed, the necessary collateral is 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 etc.). The web-presence explains the goals, terms, structure of the competition and includes 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 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.

STAGE THREE: Competition Delivery (March – December)

In this stage of the competition, Piraeus 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 proposals need to be generated for the latter stages of the competition.

• Proposal Generation and submission

Following the development of the necessary marketing material, the annual competition is launched via a coordinated PR programme. During this critical 'proposal generation' stage of the competition, partners in Piraeus organise a range of activities to publicise the competition, but also to try 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 on-line 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, including;

• An award ceremony (finalists & demo day)

Following the evaluation process, the team in Piraeus organise an award ceremony and demo day. The teams with the highest scores are asked to present their proposals to the evaluation committee at this public event and the winners of the competition are announced. In the first year of the competition, the first three winning groups were awarded prizes totalling 15,000 Euros, which could be used as seed capital for the commercialisation of their idea and have the chance to be hosted and incubated in an Aeiphoria.net programme supporting start-ups. In the first competition the top 3 finalists received €5,000 worth of business services and free entry to the incubation/acceleration program offered by Aeiphoria.net at their co-working space in Athens. Awards were only granted to enterprises that have completed the legal formation process in their country of origin. The award ceremonies are hosted and coordinated by senior representatives from the marine and maritime economy.

STAGE FOUR: Incubation Programme (January – May)

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.

Competition winners are offered incubation support, in the form of mentoring, advice, support, office space, seed funding and the right conditions to help them develop their idea further and start their business venture. As mentioned above, the 3 finalists teams receive 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.

During its 2 years of operations, Aephoria.net has trained 58 business teams, has incubated 15 start-ups, while it has developed innovative business competitions like Blue Growth and Athens Start-up Weekend Sustainability.

STAGE FIVE: Ongoing celebration and promotion (Ongoing)

Over the lifetime of the programme, the emerging entrepreneurs and the concept of entrepreneurship are celebrated and widely promoted. All teams are required to participate in promotional media and press events related to the Blue Growth marine challenge competition and the Aephoria.net program. This includes, but is not limited to, giving interviews and providing content for press releases and other promotional material.

Teams are not required to disclose any proprietary or otherwise confidential information related to their businesses. The Blue Growth marine challenge competition organizing committee and Aephoria.net provide relevant consultation to the participating teams, upon request, in order to avoid unnecessary sharing of information.

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EUROPEAN UNION
European Regional
Development Fund
URBACT II (2014-2020) Programme



Piraeus
Greece



Ostend
Belgium



Salerno
Italy



Matosinhos
Portugal



Mataro
Spain



Galati
Romania



Burgas
Bulgaria



4.0 THE TRANSFER METHODOLOGY

As a result of the discussions and collaborative working between partners, the following core principles were agreed as part of the overall Transfer Methodology;

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 GP	Local Transfer Plan Development - helping cities to develop an adapted Local Transfer Plan, which is agreed by their 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' ¹ 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' ² 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 bi-monthly one-one's between the LP/LE and PPs via Skype, to provide the support needed to ULG co-ordinators and ULGs to transfer the GP. 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

Ultimately, the partnership concluded that the most appropriate approach to transferring the Good Practice was to adopt a combination of transnational meetings (where we visit a number of the cities in the Network to deal with particular themes and issues) and individual reviews, where the Lead Partner and Lead Expert work with individual cities to address particular transfer issues.

The Transnational Exchange Meetings focused on the delivery of the thematic knowledge, skills and capabilities partners need to successfully deliver the transfer (on a Just in Time Basis); the Bi-Lateral/Trilateral Meetings (which will be organised to coincide with Transnational Meetings) were used to define transfer challenges, identify potential solutions & transfer knowledge/skills & capability; and bi-monthly one-one's (between the LP/LE and PPs) which took place via Skype, were designed to monitor the transfer progress and provide support to the individual cities.

¹Just in Time Training - knowledge delivered to learners at the moment they need it and to the location they need

²Quality Circle - a group of people who meet regularly to consider ways of resolving problems and improving production in their organization.

Timing of the knowledge and training inputs

In deciding how to structure the work programme, it became clear that the optimum timescale for delivering a 12-month blue economy entrepreneurship programme was between March 2019 and March 2020. This timescale fitted well with the overall operation of what will be the 6th round of the Piraeus Blue Growth Competition (with partners delivery potentially trailing the delivery of the competition delivery in Piraeus by a few months), but also aligned well with the timescale of the Urbact Programme, with the last 6 months or so being used for dissemination/capitalisation.

This effectively resulted in an indicative delivery timetable for partners as set out below (although this was, of course, adapted by cities in their Transfer Plans and in delivery)

The five phases of the BGI GP	Activities	Indicative delivery timetable for the GP in the receiving cities
Stage 1	Establishment of a strong multi-agency structure for overseeing the leadership, management and delivery of the initiative	Jun 2018 – Mar 2019 (Ongoing)
Stage 2	Competition Preparation	Apr – Jun 2019
Stage 3	Competition Delivery	Jun – Dec 2019
Stage 4	Incubation Programme	Dec 2019 – June 2020
Stage 5	Ongoing celebration and promotion	Ongoing

Indicative delivery timetable for the Transfer of the Good Practice to partner cities

Based on the above timetable, we structured a programme of Transnational Learning and Exchange based on the timetable set out below. As always, this programme was subject to review through discussion with partners.

Delivering the knowledge, skills and learning required to successfully manage the transfer	Indicative timetable for the delivery of the knowledge, learning and skills needed to manage an effective transfer
Governance, Leadership, management, delivery and partnership working	Jun 2018 - June 2020 (Ongoing)
Incubation/acceleration/mentoring programmes	Feb 2019 - Feb 2020
Marketing, Competition Delivery & Proposal Evaluation	Feb 2019 - Dec 2019
Evaluation, celebration/promotion & sustainability	Feb - Jun 2020

Indicative timetable for transnational learning and exchange inputs

A comment on the effectiveness of the transfer process

Whilst this process meant that partners needed to learn whilst doing, it generally proved effective in helping partners to Transfer the Good Practice to their cities. Because the process was structured around four blocks of learning, each partner could digest and understand what was required in each block of activity, before needing to move to the next stage.

That said, it could be argued that it might have been more helpful for partners to have undertaken all the learning activities (i.e. been able to undertake a 12-month transnational learning programme) prior to needing to implement the transfer. This approach might have allowed partners to develop a more holistic understanding of how best to transfer the Good Practice, prior to needing to transfer it.

However, adopting this approach would have required a 30-month programme duration (if one includes the time needed for a Sharing Period), rather than the 24 months that were originally available under the normal Urbact Structure. However, this is a unique issue for this Network, as the competition programme is an Annual competition, and we suspect not many other networks are structured in the same way.

It could also be argued that the process of 'learning whilst doing' helped to add impetus to partners plans and create a strong delivery mindset.





5.0 THE ADDED VALUE OF TRANSNATIONAL WORKING

The process of transnational working was universally felt to be useful by all partners. This can be evidenced from the feedback received in the mid-term review process, where partners collectively scored their experiences of transnational learning very highly.

Beyond the standard benefits of learning from each other, learning from the Good Practice city and sharing wider experiences (cluster policy, innovation policy linked to blue growth), several other identifiable benefits were gained from the transnational learning process;

Firstly, cities with differing levels of 'natural' Entrepreneurship learned that they had to tailor and adapt their competitions to better suit their local market circumstances. For example, some partners, whose cities had particularly low levels of entrepreneurship and/or high levels of out migration, opted to focus heavily on organising hackathon's to stimulate more business ideation activities. This is something several cities (i.e. Galati and Burgas) recognised they had to do, to stimulate enough business ideas for their competitions.

Others with higher levels of natural entrepreneurship chose not to organise hackathons but relied heavily on prizes to draw applicants into the process (i.e. Mataro and Matosinhos). The offer of competition prizes – which came from private sector sponsorship secured – generally appeared to help these partners attract more 'mature' entrepreneurs to apply to their competitions.

In addition, cities with these two different economies and competition structures also attracted different types of applicants. Cities with lower levels of natural entrepreneurship, who used hackathons to generate new business ideas, generally stimulated the creation of more 'early stage' business ideas.

Cities with more developed entrepreneurial cultures, with prize money to offer, generally attracted business ideas that were 'closer to market'. A number of these cities found businesses with well-developed business plans.

These differences also impacted on the incubation offer that 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. These cities often found themselves in a situation of having to draw together newly developed training programmes to prepare these 'early stage' entrepreneurs for business.

Those that generated business ideas that were closer to market, were generally more able to rely on a more 'classical' incubation offer – involving just mentoring and office space - which were often capable of being provided by an indigenous incubation provider in the city.

Through the process of transnational learning, the cities developed a clearer understanding of these issues and began to better understand how their own entrepreneurial ecosystem compared to others and how well suited it was to the realities of the locality. Through this process, cities also began to understand how well suited their local incubation offer was to the needs of the local market. In some circumstances, cities found they had generated a high number of 'early stage' business ideas, but their local incubation offer was only well suited to 'close to market' entrepreneurs (because it was a quite a commercial incubation offer, that charged for services, but the 'early stage' entrepreneurs needed a significant amount of free support if they were to establish a business).

In this situation, the major learning for the city was the need for them to further enhance their incubation offer, to provide a more holistic service.





6.0 THE IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS

Mid way through the implementation of the Transfer, the Coronavirus crises impacted on the delivery of the transfer process.

Fortunately, for many of the cities, they had selected their competition winners by the time they were required to enter lockdown, although the situation did impact on the delivery of the Incubation programme for all partners.

For those that were relying on a 'classic' (coworking space based) incubation offer, provided by a project partner, re-orientating their incubation offer to an online delivery model proved challenging. For those that were more heavily focussed on a delivering training and mentoring support to their competition winners there was more of a possibility that online delivery was a realistic option.

However, those cities that were able to contemplate a shift to an online delivery model needed sufficient critical mass of competition entrants and sufficient remaining budget to make this aspiration a reality.

In many cases, driven by the decision of their main incubation partner, cities opted to pause their incubation process, pending the end of Coronavirus restrictions. At the time of writing, it is too early to tell whether this decision will have a positive or negative impact on the entrepreneurs likelihood of success or not.

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7.0 THE CITIES TRANSFER STORIES



In this section of the report, we present the progress, successes and challenges experienced by each city in transferring the Piraeus Good Practice.

7.1 SALERNO (IT)

Original Ambition:

The city of Salerno joined the project in phase 2 of the BluAct Network, having had little or no experience of running a Blue Growth Competition before (although the city has a rich innovation eco-system with numerous players that are active in promoting innovation and entrepreneurship).

Salerno originally joined the network ***because they wanted to seat the Blue Growth sector as a strategic sector of importance in the city.***

The original timetable planned for Salerno's competition was as follows;

- Competition Preparation: Dec 2018 – Sept 2019
- Competition Launch: Sep 2019
- Competition Close: Dec 2019
- Competition Delivery: Aug 2019 – May 2020
- Demo Day/Award Ceremony: Oct/Nov/Dec 2020
- Incubation: March 2020 – Dec 2020

Salerno planned to publicise the competition at the open port days. The formal launch was planned for September, with a Website and App to launch the competition.

Workshops were planned for September and November 2019 to publicise the competition. The Industrial Union organises an annual Hackathon, which takes place over two days, which the city wanted to include as part of the overall competition, with a new section dedicated to the blue economy.



The Salerno Maritime Station – the venue for the Blue Growth Award Ceremony

Salerno planned to use the Industrial Union Hackathons to generate new business ideas. In January and February 2020, the city planned to organise further Hackathon's and close the competition in February or March 2020, with Incubation running June to September 2020

The original goals set out in the Transfer Plan were to;

- **To establish a sustainable Blue Growth Competition in Salerno by September 2019;**
- **20 individuals recruited/reached for the hackathon-type event by February 2020;**
- **5 entrepreneurs/teams prepared for Demo Day by June 2020;**
- **10 ULG members actively involved at each bi-monthly meeting by December 2020;**
- **1 start-up established by end of 2020;**
- **To create 4 new jobs.**

Successes achieved by Salerno:

Having looked at their local strategic assets, the Municipality built a strong governance structure for overseeing the delivery of their competition. This governance structure included representatives from;

- **The Port of Salerno** - one of the most active in the Tyrrhenian Sea;
- **Industrial Union of Salerno** – who organise an annual festival of entrepreneurship and innovation, which involved entrepreneurs pitching their business ideas to potential investors;
- **The University of Salerno** – with strong faculties of economics, engineering, computer science, science and medicine; and
- **Palazzo Innovazione** – a privately run incubator, which had recently been inaugurated in the city.

The municipality set out to try and connect these different parts of the cities innovation and entrepreneurship eco-system together, to better align them all behind the organisation of a single, city-wide Blue Growth Entrepreneurship competition.

The Municipality took a strategic decision quite early on in the organisation of their activities to integrate a Blue Growth Entrepreneurship Award into an existing high-profile Business Plan Competition which is held annually in the city (the business plan competition, which is organised by the Industrial Union of Salerno, as part of the large annual festival of innovation and entrepreneurship is now in its 13th year).

Having agreed this approach, the Municipality organised several successful workshops and 1:1 meetings to generate excitement and interest in the Blue Growth Entrepreneurship Award. This included;

- The Economic Policies of the Sea – 7th October 2019
- The Sea as a Resource - 22nd October 2019
- When the Port merges with the city - 7th November 2019 Workshop
- From the idea to the company- 13th November 2019 Workshop
- Discontinuity, innovation and entrepreneurial mindset - 22nd November 2019 workshop

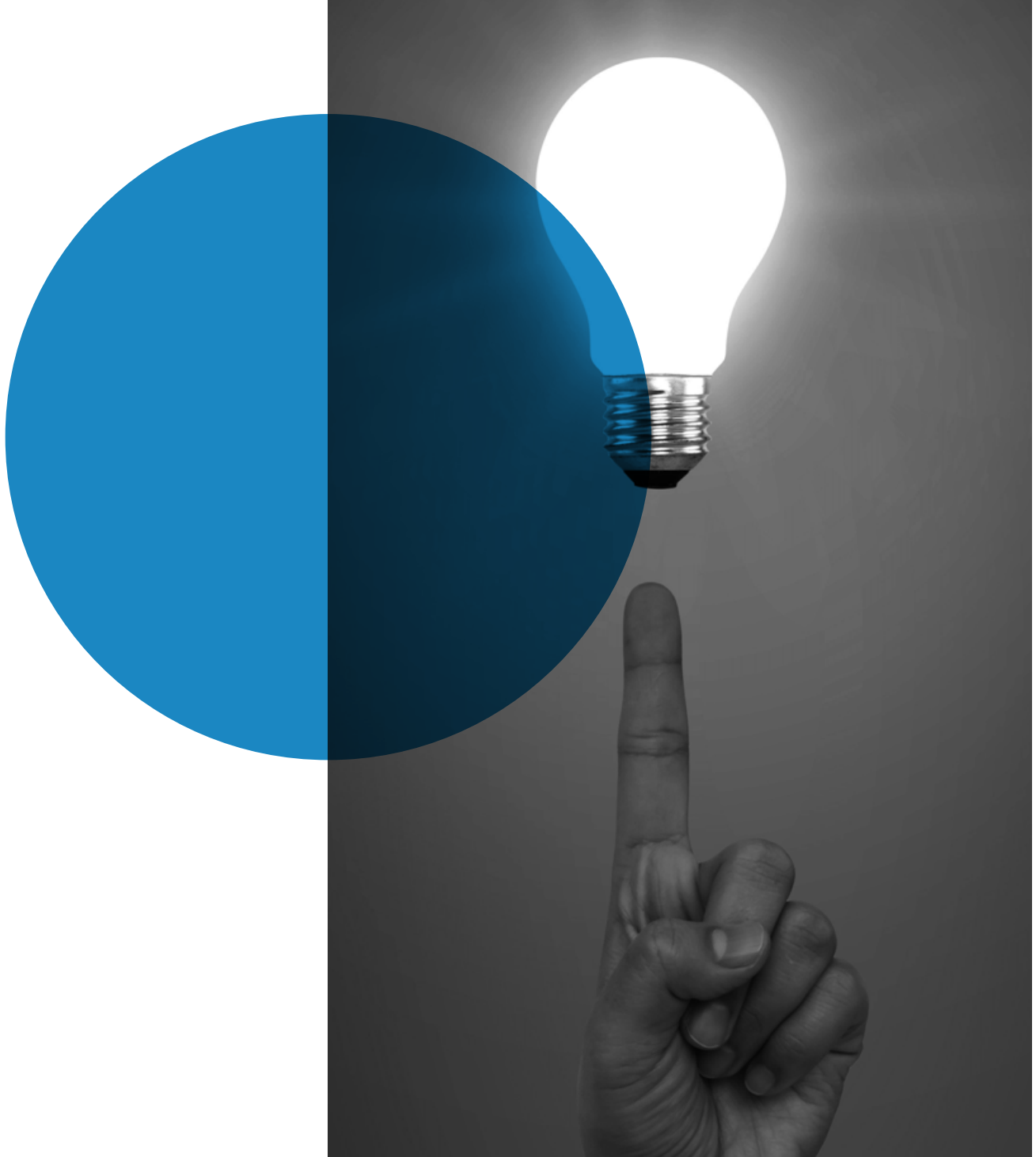
The Municipality also developed a competition website (<http://www.bluaactsalerno.unisa.it/>), which was produced by a University Student.

All this activity fed a high-profile Innovation Best Practices Award Ceremony – held at the impressive Maritime Station in Salerno on 5th and 6th December 2019 - which generated applications from nine aspiring blue growth entrepreneurs.

In addition to this, the University of Salerno launched a new competition in 2020, inspired by the BGI, dedicated to the Blue Economy.

Salerno have also planned the organisation of a Demo Day, in which to feed all applicants.



***Challenges Salerno experienced:***

Whilst Salerno have been successful in generating a good number of business ideas for their competition, they envisage it will be a challenge to transfer these into good quality businesses. The reasons for this are complex but include the nature of the ideas (i.e. early stage research) but also because of the lack of a free, integrated incubation offer in the city (there are incubators, but not necessarily targeted at 'early stage' businesses).

Next Steps

Having seeded the idea of running a Blue Growth competition in the city, the Municipality hopes that other partners will now take forward a regular competition in the future. The city will be happy to continue to offer their support for such an activity, but feels others are better placed to lead the initiative.



7.2 MATARO (ES)

Original Ambition:

The city of Mataro aspires to open the city to the sea. The Municipality's original goals were to promote the blue economy and stimulate new businesses. The foundations for this project were laid in the Sea Value project, which sought to promote a nautical culture, develop the blue economy and open the city to the sea.

The original timetable planned for Mataro's competition was as follows;

- Competition Preparation: Jan 2019 – Jun 2019
- Competition Launch: Jul 2019
- Competition Close: Oct 2019
- Competition Delivery: Jan 2019 – Nov 2019
- Demo Day/Award Ceremony: Dec 2019
- Incubation: Nov 2019 – Dec 2020

The original goals set out in the Transfer Plan were to;

- Obtain the participation of **5 start-ups / projects in the 1st edition of the Bluact Awards**
- **Create an incubator around the Blue Economy from the awards and provide access to 2-3 companies by 2020**
- Obtain the participation and involvement in the ULG (Urbact Local Group) **12 enterprises, entities and associations of the sector.**
- **Creation of a permanent work group (from the ULG) to promote the blue economy in the city, formed by at least 10 entities and local companies.**

- **Creation of 4 start-ups of local entrepreneurship based on the blue economy and 12 new jobs.**
- **To carry out 70 hours of mentoring and specialized advice.**
- **Consolidate the BluAct Awards in Mataró and become a benchmark in Catalonia.**
- **Endow economically those innovative initiatives that have a blue component and are developed in Mataró.**

Successes achieved by Mataró:

The team started by building a strong Urbact Local Group (ULG) with members coming from some of the key partners involved in promoting blue growth, innovation and entrepreneurship in the region. This included representatives from;

- **Barcelona Nautic Cluster** – a regional marine and maritime business cluster;
- **The Port of Mataró** – the local port;
- **Tecnocampus** – a university linked innovation/incubation provider with a strong reputation for business start-ups;

This partnership gave them a strong foundation on which to build, with a strong incubation partner; a strong marine and maritime cluster; and an active port authority.

The original plan was to open the competition in Mataró between Jun 2019 and March 2020. Their partnership with a strong University linked incubator, Tecnocampus, was a particular feature of their competition, together with the sponsorship prize money they secured from the Port of Mataró and the close co-operation of Barcelona Nautic Cluster, who offered to promote the competition to the Marine & Maritime sector.

Originally, the Municipality had planned to integrate their own award programme into a high-profile entrepreneurship awards programme that is held annually in the city – the Cre@tic Awards. However, this became increasingly difficult as their programme experienced slippage and the Municipality had to reconfigure its plans.

In the end, applications to the Cre@tic Awards ended up feeding the BluAct Blue Growth Entrepreneurship competition (rather than this being a separate category in the Cre@tic Awards). That said, by the time the competition closed, the city had received 7 high quality applications for their Blue Growth Entrepreneurship Programme, with a Demo Day held in March 2020 selecting the top 3 winners.

A professionally organised award ceremony took place in the 3rd week of June, with mentoring and incubation starting in July 2020 and running to March/April 2021. Winners of the competition included;

The “Premis BluAct Awards” organized by Ajuntament de Mataró



PROJECT	PRIZE	DESCRIPTION
VIENTO EN POPA 365	1st	A franchisable boat repair & refit workshop, "Viento en Popa 365" (trade mark)
YACHT WORK LIST	2nd	An application that facilitates communication between superyachts, management companies, refit shipyards and contractors in general.
IOT ELÈCTRIC	3rd	An electric boat propulsion systems, which are much more environmentally friendly, quieter and simpler.

Prizes offered to the winners of the competition included;

1st classified

- Cash prize of four thousand euros (€4,000) (donated by Mataró's Port Consortium)
- Mentoring programme and business accelerator programme valued at €1,000 (donated by TecnoCampus)
- BluAct coworking at TecnoCampus (payable by Mataró City Council)
- Support in the promotion and presence in media (payable by Mataró City Council).

2nd and 3rd classified

- Mentoring programme and business accelerator programme valued at €1,000 (donated by TecnoCampus)
- BluAct coworking at TecnoCampus (payable by Mataró City Council)
- Support in the promotion and presence in media (payable by Mataró City Council).

Challenges Mataro experienced:

The Municipality of Mataro had some challenges along the way including the fact that some expenses (cash prizes and incubator rental) were classed as ineligible; slow administrative and legal procedures; and difficulties in obtaining private financing. This meant they had to reconsider the initial calendar of the project and develop a new approach to the format of the event, outside the framework of the Cre@ticAwards.

In addition, in common with Salerno, because the municipality has partnered with quite a 'commercial' incubation provider, it found itself in a situation where their incubation programme was best suited to businesses that were 'investment ready', running the risk of more 'early stage' ideas struggling to find the support they need to progress into business.

As it was, this did not present too much of a problem for the city, as the eventual ideas submitted were well formed, but it may raise a question for future years, should the city progress with the competition as an annual event and want to support a broader range of aspiring entrepreneurs.

Next Steps

Plans are being developed to maintain the blue growth competition next year. The city has built a strong foundation programme on which to build next year.



7.3 OSTEND (BE)

Original Ambition:

The city of Ostend joined the competition to ***‘establish a solid blue growth and entrepreneurship ecosystem being Ostend SeaZone’***.

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The city is characterised by a strong blue economy, although the eco-system is a little fragmented. Because of out-migration and an ageing population, in the winter Ostend can become a bit of a ghost city. The city has a declining fishing industry. The Municipality wants to use the competition to create a stronger blue growth ecosystem, by strengthening the partnership in the city between the various actors.

They aspire to better connect the physical, virtual spaces and support services connected to the sea – to try and get the whole sea concepts in the city pulling together. The partners envisage they will organise low and high technical challenges.

In organising their competition, the city of Ostend broadly followed the five-stage process of the Piraeus Blue Growth Initiative.

The original timetable planned for Ostend’s competition was as follows;

- Competition Preparation: Feb 2019 – Aug 2019
- Competition Launch: June 2019
- Competition Close: Nov 2019
- Competition Delivery: Sep 2019 – Nov 2019
- Demo Day/Award Ceremony: Jan 2020
- Incubation: Feb 2020 – Dec 2020

The original goals set out in the Transfer Plan were to;

- Increased engagement of students in marine and maritime topics: 450 students enrolled in relevant programs (summerschools, universities, ...);
- Increased number of businesses, start-ups related to blue growth topics settle down in Ostend: 2 innovative start-ups; 4 potential innovative start-ups for incubation; 6 innovative start-ups with marine/blue focus;
- Increased awareness among citizens of the Blue Growth ecosystem they are being part of: 5000 citizens attending events related to Ostend SeaZone, like KBSea Startit, "Ostend at anchor";
- Obtain active involvement of the private sector within the SeaZone group advisory board: 7 enterprises joining the SeaZone network.

Successes achieved by Ostend:

The Municipality of Ostend held a launch event for their competition at the GreenBridge Incubator on the 10th September 2019. The competition was structured around a SeaZone theme, a brand that was designed to act as a unifying concept in the city. The evaluation criteria developed for the competition emphasised links to Ostend, but also prioritised the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's).

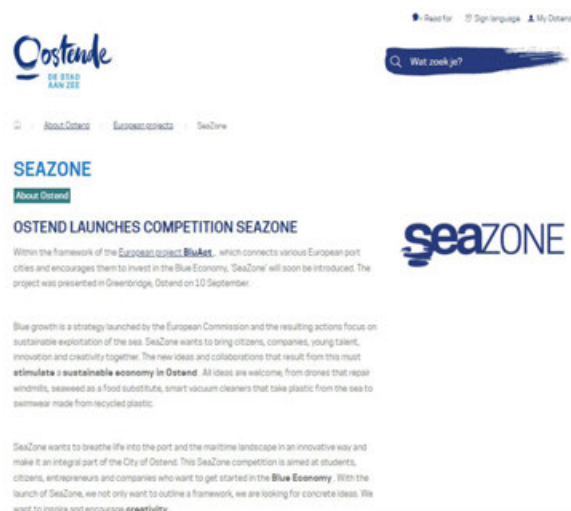
Weightings in the evaluation process prioritised;

- The Sustainability goals of the project (50%)
- The link to Ostend (30%)
- The Innovative character of the idea (10%)
- The impact on the SDG's (5%)
- The impact on the climate (5%)

The overall programme for the cities Blue Growth Competition, was split into three phases;

- PHASE 1: INTAKE (From 01/09/2019 to 30/11/2019) - Submitting proposals online
- PHASE II: EVALUATION (From 01/12/2019 to 31/01/2020) - Evaluation of submitted proposals
- PHASE III: ROLL-OUT (From 01/02/2020 to 31/12/2020) - Development and incubation

The marketing material developed included branding, advertising material and the website (<https://www.oostende.be/seazone>). The competition closed on 5 January 2020 with 9 high-quality ideas submitted by this date. A pitch session was organised for 10th March 2020, with evaluation selecting 5 'laureates' that have been offered a mix of personal and online mentoring.



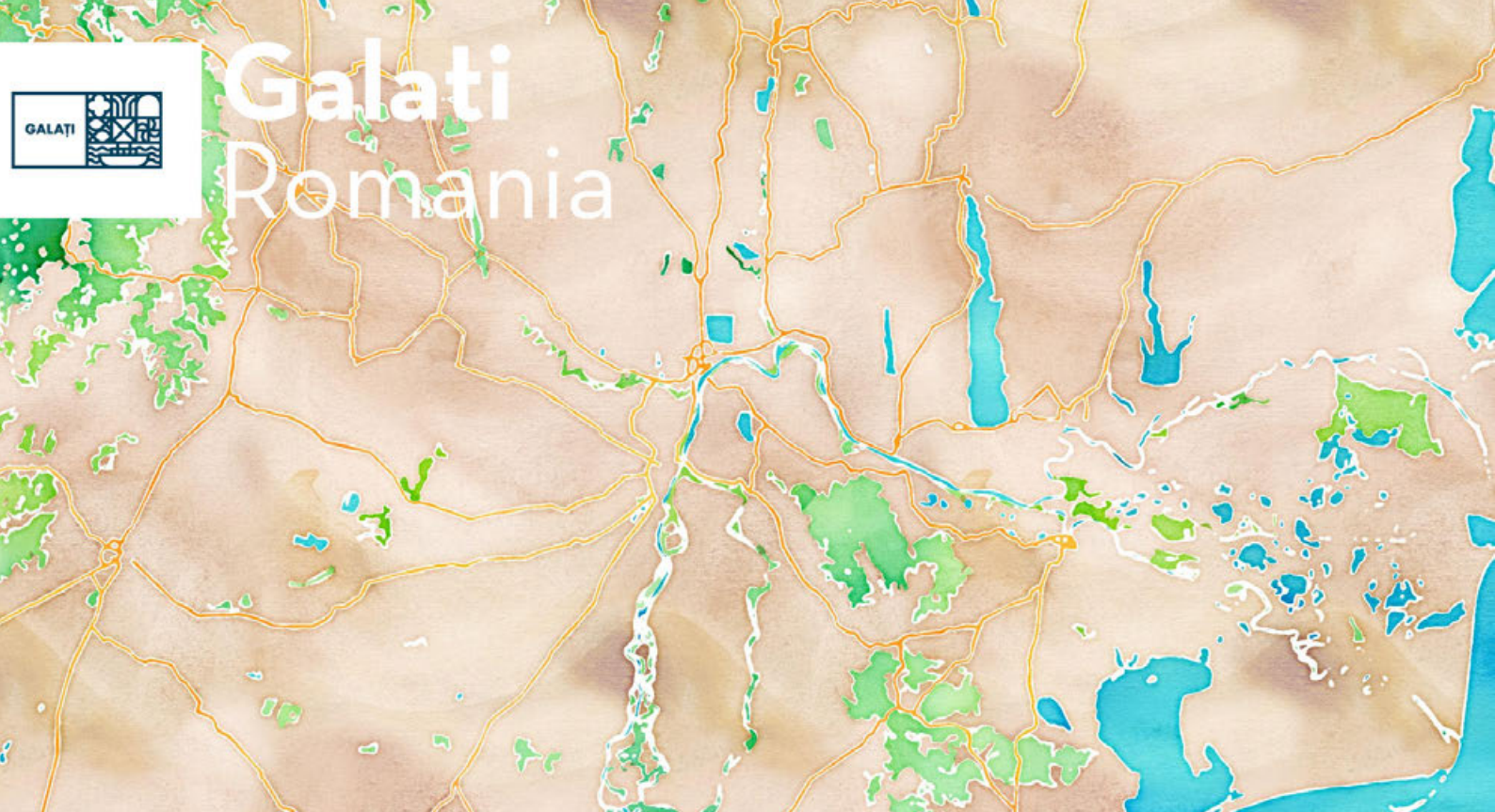
The selection of 'laureates' (as opposed to 'winners') and the offer of a personalised mentoring and coaching programme are two features of the Ostend competition which are particularly distinctive. Challenges Ostend experienced:

Whilst the city did well at collaborating with many of the partners in the city, one of the key challenges Ostend has experienced is getting ALL those that are interested in the Blue Economy in the city (and the wider sub-region) to pull together on the promotion of a city-wide blue growth entrepreneurship competition. The reasons for this are complex but can generally be put down to organisational trust, power and geography issues (with some of the regional partners not necessarily seeing the city as a strong influence in this space).

Some of the ways to overcome this issue might have been to establish a more powerful ULG structure (with a chairperson with strong political influence at a regional and national level) and to involve some of the larger private sector firms in the area in the ULG (as they are very active in regional structures).

Next Steps

The city is already planning for a second competition, starting in 2021. They are also planning to run a conference on Blue Tourism in late 2020. Through these activities, the city will continue to build on the Seazone concept and on the work undertaken through the Urbact Transfer Network.



7.4 GALATI (RO)

Original Ambition:

The Municipality and its partners were aiming to recruit 100 individuals for two hackathons which would feed the competition and split them into two groups. They were aiming to establish 5 teams of entrepreneurs prepared for the demo day and actively involve 10 ULG members in supporting these teams.

The municipality and its partners were hoping for at least one start-up by the end of the project.

They planned to set up an incubation agreement and launch the competition in October and November 2019, with Universities starting the process through organised events, with incubation running from February – October 2020.

The process the Municipality followed broadly echoed the five stages of the Piraeus Blue Growth Initiative, with two hackathons added to reach out into the entrepreneurial community to find innovative business ideas.

Key dates in their programme included;

- Competition Launch Date - 14th October 2019
- Hackathon 1 – 14th November 2019
- Hackathon 2 – 12th December 2019
- Competition closing date – 14th January 2020
- First stage of judging – 14th Jan -14th Feb 2020
- Preparation week – 23rd- 29th March 2020
- Demo Day – 06th-11th April 2020
- Business Incubation – May- September 2020 (divided as follows: 2 sessions/ week, 2 hrs/session, approx. total hrs: 75)
- Final Pitch – October 2020 (final date to be determined)

The original goals set out in the transfer plan were to have;

- **100 individuals recruited/reached for the 2 hackathon-type events by January 2020**
- **30 individuals attending the second hackathon by January 2020**
- **20 individuals attending the first by January 2020**
- **10 ULG members actively involved at each bi-monthly meeting by December 2020**
- **5 entrepreneurs/teams prepared for Demo Day by June 2020**
- **1 start-up - our first Danube maritime start-up established by end of 2020**

Successes Achieved:

The Municipality of Galati planned a very detailed programme for delivering the Transfer, which is branded under the regionally flavoured **Danube Growth Initiative** banner.

The Municipality built a strong Urbact Local Group, comprising members from Universities, the River Authority, NGO's, public bodies and port-based businesses.

The city held two successful Hackathon's, with the first being run on the 14th November 2019, organised around 4 teams. The second Hackathon was organised on 12 December 2019 and generated 11 proposals. Overall, 34 business ideas were generated in total from the two Hackathons.

As far as evaluating the different applications are concerned, business ideas were to be judged based on the following criteria:

- Presentation
- Innovation
- Team expertise
- Market need
- Feasibility

The voting process was based on an 80-20 rule (80% jury, 20% public vote). The jury judged a candidate by awarding each criteria a grade from 1 to 10. Each jury member then calculated an average score for a candidate. That final score for the candidate represented the average score of all jury members. The public were also invited to choose the best project for every criterion mentioned. Based on the number of votes received by a candidate, projects were scored from 1 to 10 as well.

The Municipality have plans to feed the ideas generated from the hackathons into a preparation week (6-10 October 2020) and a Demo Day (15th October 2020), after which candidates will enter an Incubation Programme with the final pitch taking place in February 2021 and an Award Ceremony in the Summer of 2021.

Challenges Galati Experienced;

The biggest challenge the city of Galati is likely to experience is in the next phase of the competition is turning these 34 ideas into viable businesses and offering a suitable incubation programme to support these aspiring entrepreneurs.

The reasons for this are complex, but include issues such as the maturity of the ideas, the availability of patient customers and finance etc. One solution to addressing this issue could be to try and strengthen the support package and programmes available to 'early stage' entrepreneurs in the region, although this may only be possible through additional funding, outside the scope of the Urbact Programme.

Next Steps

Beyond 2020, the city and its partners will continue to focus on supporting the early stage entrepreneurs they have identified, to encourage them into starting a business. Going forward, the city can also build on the Danube Growth Initiative, to create an ongoing regional blue growth programme.

Images from one of a number of hackathons that were organised in Galati





7.5 MATOSINHOS (PT)

Original Ambition:

34

Originally, Matosinhos set out to develop a Blue Growth Competition which was largely focussed on trying to solve issues of sea waste. Because of concerns about the range of existing blue growth competitions available nationally, and because the 'sponsoring department' in the Municipality was also environmentally focussed, the Municipality targeted a special niche, linked to pollution in the sea.

As far as the competition is concerned, Matosinhos originally planned to launch the competition in July, with a September closing date for applications. The process would involve an Open Call, a Bootcamp and a Workshop Programme, with three business ideas selected for incubation. The process the Municipality adopted broadly followed the five stages of the Piraeus Blue Growth Initiative.

The original timetable planned for Matosinhos' competition was as follows;

- Competition Preparation: Jan – Aug 2019
- Competition Launch: Jan 2019
- Competition Close: Aug 2019
- Demo Day/Award Ceremony: Sept/Nov 2019
- Incubation: Nov 2019 – Nov 2020

The original goals set out in the Transfer Plan were to;

- **Incubate 3 new start-ups from November 2019 to November 2020.**
- **To have generated 10 applications for the programme by July 2019;**
- **Organise a bootcamp with 10 participants by September 2019**
- **To have organised a demo day, by October 2019, at which we hope to have 10 potential entrepreneurs presenting their business idea.**

Successes Achieved by Matosinhos;

The Municipality set out by building a strong ULG, comprising 13 partners and also secured some commercial sponsorship through SuperBock, to support any entrepreneurs that enter the competition with an idea to reduce or address sea waste. The environmental sustainability prize would only be fully granted if the Municipality could evidence good environmental practices from the companies in the incubation programme.

The Municipality hired a communication company to update all their social platforms and used press advertising to generate applications. Marketing wise, they organised a launch and established a website, which secured national coverage.

Matosinhos' three main incentives to encourage people to apply were the sponsorship funding secured from SuperBock; the incubation support; but also mentoring during the incubation period.

In the end their competition was open from late 2019 until 9 Feb 2020, with a bootcamp scheduled 26 Feb – 2 March 2020, which would be followed by a Demo Day and a 12-month incubation programme.

By the time the competition had closed, the city had received 7 high-quality applications from which they selected 3 winners who will be put through an incubation programme provided by UPTEC MAR.

The business ideas selected to progress included;

- A degradable Polylactic Acid.
- A business renewing and recycling Shipping Containers
- An aquaculture business that aims to improve fish food, through a pink plankomycete-based diet.

Challenges experienced by Matosinhos

As far as Competition Delivery is concerned Matosinhos suffered quite a significant delay (due to the time taken to complete administrative procedures) and the competition finally launched in late October 2019 with a Bootcamp scheduled for the end of November and Demo Day scheduled in December. Further slippages meant the city had quite a short competition window over the Christmas holiday period, which may have limited the number of applications received.

Next Steps

Matosinhos has been successful in attracting a number of high-quality applicants for their competition this year, a number of which are quite heavily research orientated. Going forward, these businesses will require further support to scale their activities and this is where the Municipality will be concentrating its efforts, through its close partnership with UPTEC MAR, the Science and Technology Park of the University of Porto, which has a base in Matosinhos.

Finalists of the Matosinhos BluAct competition





Burgas Bulgaria

7.6 BURGAS (BG)

Original Ambition:

Burgas were keen to try and use the competition to try to find an innovative idea for a product/service and support entrepreneurs to turn that into a viable business idea.

They built a good, solid plan to launch the project, which was focussed on using hackathons to generate business ideas for an entrepreneurship competition.

This adaptation they developed was felt to be necessary by the team in Burgas because of the lower levels of 'natural' entrepreneurship that existed in Burgas. Other than this adaptation, the team followed the five-stage process utilised by Piraeus in the delivery of their Blue Growth Initiative.

The original timetable planned for Burgas' competition was as follows;

- Competition Preparation: May 2019 – July 2019
- Competition Launch: Aug 2019
- Competition Close: Jan 2020
- Demo Day/Award Ceremony: Jan 2020
- Incubation: Feb 2020 – May 2020

The original goals set out in the Transfer Plan were to;

- Deliver a full-scale implementation of the Blue-growth competition;
- Generate a sufficient number of application forms and evaluation;
- Establish a team/office for providing overall project management/administrative support to the project implementation; meetings, preparation of documents/rules and all administrative staff needed for the project implementation;
- Enlarge the members of the Urbact Local Group group so as to include all relevant stakeholders;
- Establish an Advisory Board/Steering Committee; and
- Elaboration of ULG commitment and regulation agreement

Successes Achieved by Burgas:

Burgas set out to establish a strong Urbact Local Group, with wide representation from public, private, academic and community partners. They hired a communication agency and commenced a promotional and marketing campaign to generate interest in applying to the Blue Growth Entrepreneurship competition.

They worked with partners to organise a Hackathon dedicated to the Blue economy which took place on the 12 - 13 October, which involved 60- 70 attendees. More information can be found at <https://hackathon.chemguide.info/>

Entrepreneurial ideas generated at the Hackathon varied in different sectors from the Blue economy, including:

- o The creation of a cryptocurrency - blue coins;
- o An electricity generator;
- o The creation of a Fish Tracking System;
- o The creation of a platform for sharing fishing capacity;
- o A system for using recovered ocean plastic in different business applications;

The number of applications/entries generated from general marketing has been relatively low, potentially reflecting the general low levels of entrepreneurship in the region.

Future plans include the organisation of a demo day and a 'campus' in October 2020 - a structured pre-incubation programme to try and help the business ideas progress into fledgling businesses.

Challenges Burgas experienced;

Whilst Burgas have been successful in generating a good number of business ideas from the locality, many of these have been 'early stage' ideas, which have lacked business maturity. This is because many of them came from hackathons.

The number of business plans generated from mainstream promotion has been relatively limited. The reasons for this are complex but may point towards the need to try;

- To target key opportunity areas, where there is known to be a growing demand for businesses (possibly leisure and tourism);
- To put in place a stronger, more lengthy business incubation programme to try and support the 'early stage' entrepreneurs they have got to start up in business.

Next Steps

The next steps for the municipality include organising the Demo Day and 'Campus' for competition entrants, to help move the business ideas generated by the hackathons into early stage businesses. As such, the focus for the team in Burgas will be on delivering a successful incubation and business support programme.

Examples of Burgas' activities to date

A decorative banner for the Burgas Hackathon. It features various icons related to technology and business, such as a laptop, a smartphone, a network diagram, and a person. The text "УНИВЕРСИТЕТ „Проф. д-р Асен Златаров“ - Бургас" is prominently displayed in the center. Below it, the "BURGAS HACKATHON" logo is shown, consisting of a stylized 'H' and the text "BURGAS HACKATHON".

УНИВЕРСИТЕТ
„Проф. д-р Асен Златаров“ - Бургас

BURGAS
HACKATHON



7.7 PIRAEUS (GR)

Original Ambition:

As the city that has devised the competition, Piraeus focussed on a number of key issues in their improvement plan, including, stimulating greater diversity of applications, making the competition bigger, involving more people, institutionalising the process, documenting the process, enhancing access to finance etc.

They aspire to produce a guide – how to run the competition and how to finance it to give people a helping hand. They want to try and generate more, better quality proposals, introduce a stricter evaluation process, enhance the incubation programme, open up the group and enhance the documentation underpinning the process.



Successes Achieved by Piraeus:

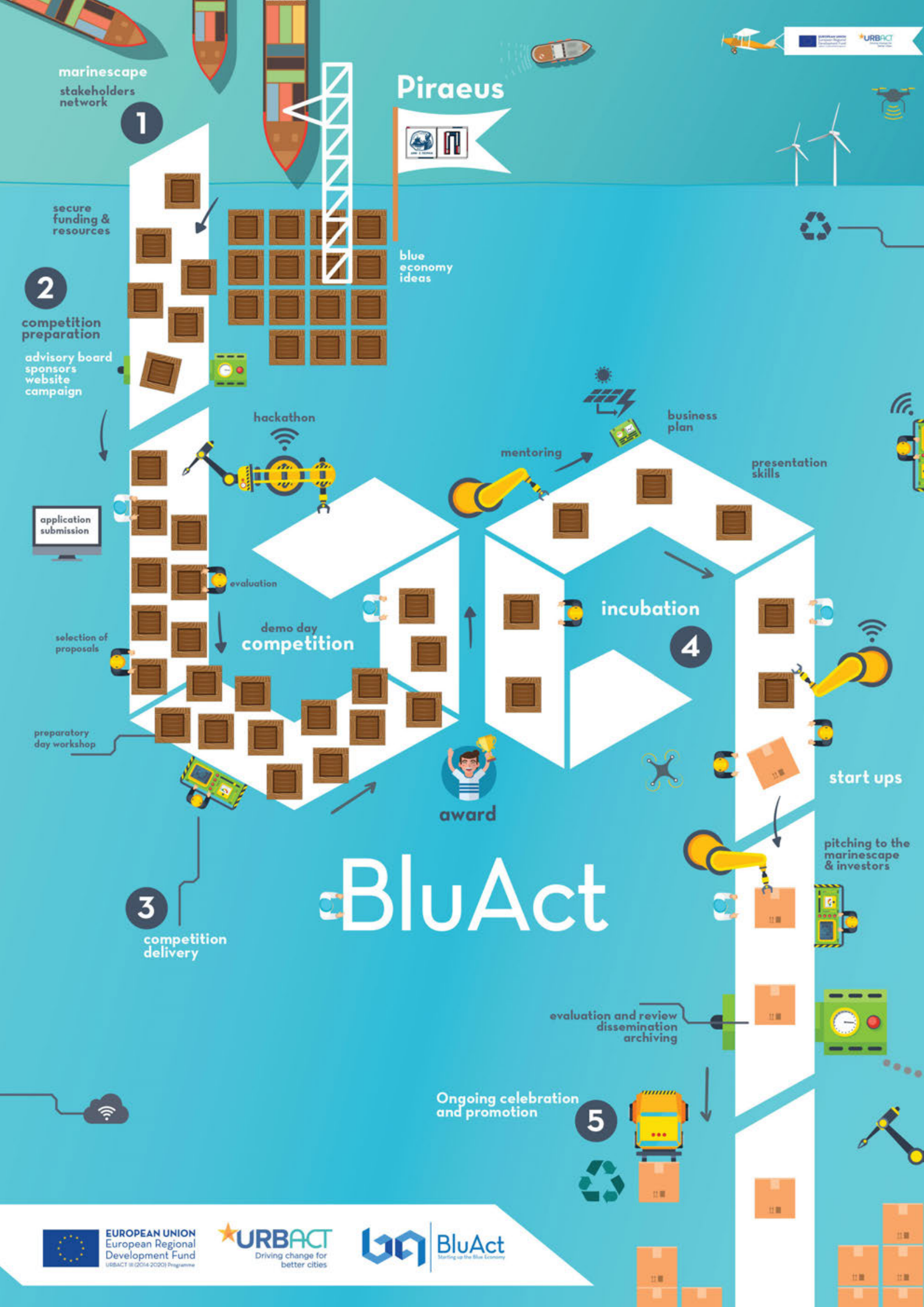
- Their improvement plan included a focus on several potential areas for improvement, including;
 - o The Marinescape as an Urban Living Lab
 - o Marinescape diversification and Expansion
 - o The ‘institutionalisation’ of the Marinescape and “Blue Growth Ambassador”
 - o Operationalization/Documentation of BGI preparation, funding and sponsorship
 - o Operationalization /Documentation of relevant EU financing Instruments
 - o The Creation of a local/regional/EU investment programme for blue entrepreneurs
 - o Improved quality of proposals
 - o Operationalisation/documentation of BGI competition delivery
 - o Consultation of the ULG for the thematic priorities of the BGI
 - o Integration of thematic foci or central philosophies in the competition
 - o Higher amount of applications and proposals
 - o Stricter evaluation processes and rigorous selection
 - o Second, internal round of proposal evaluation
 - o More mature teams and ideas to enter the incubation stage
 - o Competitive incubation programme based on market needs
 - o Curriculum Documentation and improvement
 - o More diverse group of mentors
 - o Improvement of incubation sessions
 - o Establishment of rules for incubation participants (attendance, participation, graduation)
 - o Evaluation of mentors, participants
 - o Establishment of a BGI alumni association
 - o Promoting the Blue Economy and BGI in Greece and Europe

Challenges Piraeus experienced:

- The challenge for the Municipality of Piraeus will likely be in striking the right balance between sustaining the competition and investing in areas of further improvement.

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.



EUROPEAN UNION
European Regional
Development Fund
URBACT III (2014-2020) Programme



BluAct
Starting up the Blue Economy

The Municipality of Piraeus signed a contract with The University of Piraeus. Purpose of this collaboration is the design and implementation of the Blue Growth Piraeus Innovation Competition, which, from now on, will be run by the University. For the implementation of the competition the usual steps will be followed.

The University of Piraeus (UniPi) is a Greek public university located in Piraeus, Greece with a total of nine academic departments in total, focused mainly on Business Management, Economics, Finance and Maritime Studies. The University of Piraeus has the second-oldest business school established in Greece, while the Department of Banking and Financial Management is the country's oldest academic department in the area of finance.



New Competition
2020

Marinescape expansion
Preparation of the
competition

blue/lab.

Incubation programme /
Final presentation at
Poseidonia event

JUNE 2020

MARCH 2020
Demo Day

FEB 2020
pre-evaluation,
announcement
of the finalists

JAN 2020
Submissions
of proposals

Autumn 2019
BGI goes
national

blue/lab.

OCTOBER
ULG meeting
in the Piraeus
Centre for
Entrepreneurial
Development in
Blue Economy

JULY
ULG meeting
in University of
West Attica

JUNE
ULG meeting
in Piraeus Port
Authority
premises

BluAct

URBACT
Driving change for
better cities

2018

Piraeus ULG
extension

Piraeus



CONCLUSIONS





Ostend
Belgium

Matoshinos
Portugal

Mataro Spain

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

Partners display a strong commitment to the subject of blue growth and are keen to strengthen their blue growth entrepreneurship systems. The city of Piraeus is a strong lead partner, which is active in the management of the network, which has a strong project management, communication and finance team.

The network partners are positive about their transfer experience to date, with the majority of partners being confident that they will deliver on the goals set out in their Transfer Plans. Where there are concerns that partners are not going to deliver on the goals set out in the Transfer Plans, these have been caused by slight slippages in timelines and/or budgetary challenges which have meant partners have needed to reprofile their original plans. In saying this, partners still remain committed to delivering a high-quality transfer.



The Good Practice itself is characterised by a linear process, which makes it relatively simple for partners to implement. The partner cities in question have implemented a variety of activities to generate business ideas in their cities - something that the cities with lower levels of entrepreneurship have found necessary to do, to generate sufficient entrants to their competitions.

At the time of writing, all the cities who have launched and closed their competitions have between 7 – 35 entrants to their blue growth entrepreneurship programmes and are likely to be able to select a winner. That said, many of the partners have experienced some disruption, due to the Covid-19 situation with the transition into the Incubation process being delayed in most cities.

Whilst this might impact on the number of businesses and jobs created, all the cities have found the experience very useful and a number plan to continue their commitment to Blue Growth Entrepreneurship as they come out of Coronavirus restrictions.



bluact.eu