SUMMARY REPORT
EBCD/EESC event: On the road to UNOC3: How can the upcoming European Ocean pact advance ocean sustainability?
5 May 2025

On 5 May, EBCD in partnership with the European Economic and Social Committee organised a high-level event to explore how the upcoming **European Oceans Pact could advance global ocean sustainability at the 3rd United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC-3).** With UNOC-3 set to convene in Nice in June 2025 under the theme "Accelerating Action and Mobilizing All Actors to Conserve and Sustainably Use the Ocean," this event provided a timely platform to address sustainable use of our ocean. The discussion focused on the EU's commitments to SDG 14 (Life Below Water), its leadership via the upcoming European Ocean Pact, promotion of blue foods, as well as synergies, trade-offs and opportunities between various blue economy sectors. As the EU finalises its European Ocean Pact, this event brought together policy-makers, experts, and blue economy stakeholders to discuss how the Pact could enhance the EU's contributions to UNOC-3. Special attention was given to strengthening regional and sub-regional cooperation, advancing sustainable ocean-based blue economies, and promoting the role of sustainable food from the ocean for food security, nutrition and to achieve SDGs. The discussion contributed to shaping the EU's engagement at UNOC-3 and ensuring that the European Ocean Pact serves as a strategic tool for advancing ocean sustainability

Find the full report here.

SUMMARY OF THE OUTCOMES

Integrated and Inclusive Ocean Governance

There was broad consensus on the need for an **ecosystem-based** and **inclusive approach** to marine governance. This includes reconciling conservation and sustainable use, ensuring active stakeholder participation, and supporting co-management models that empower local communities. The Ocean Pact was seen as a platform to **foster collaboration across sectors and scales**, but its success hinges on meaningful implementation and inclusive dialogue.

Key messages:
- Support co-management and devolved decision-making for local communities and fishers.
- Foster multi-stakeholder engagement across maritime sectors, avoiding polarised debates.
- Ensure the Ocean Pact translates into concrete actions with clear governance structures.

Policy Coherence and Strategic Alignment

The importance of **aligning environmental, industrial, and ocean policies** at EU and global levels was stressed. Disconnected or conflicting strategies - such as those between offshore energy and conservation - must be addressed through integrated frameworks. The Ocean Pact should become an **actionable framework** that supports both **sustainability goals**, taking into equal consideration the three pillars social, economic and environmental, and **industrial competitiveness.**

Key messages:
- Align the Ocean Pact with EU policies to ensure coherence between marine conservation and blue economy goals.
- Encourage cross-border cooperation and a sea basin approach in marine planning.
- Avoid policy fragmentation by streamlining regulation while maintaining strong environmental and social safeguards.
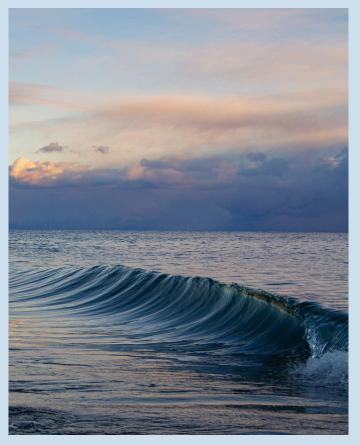
Marine Spatial Planning and Data-Driven Management

Marine spatial planning (MSP) was identified as essential to balance environmental, economic, and social interests. However, gaps remain in applying ecosystem-based principles consistently, especially regarding data integration and regional coordination. Effective MSP requires **better data sharing**, **scenario planning**, and **evaluation of cumulative impacts**.

Key messages:
- Strengthen MSP frameworks by integrating ecosystem health, future scenarios, and cumulative human impacts including climate change.
- Improve data availability, monitoring, and coordination across jurisdictions.
- Use MSP to resolve sectoral conflicts and unlock nature-based solutions

Sustainable Blue Economy and Industrial Synergies

Balancing **environmental conservation** with **economic activities** was a core theme. Participants emphasised that sectors like shipping, fisheries, aquaculture, and offshore wind play strategic roles and must be included in sustainability dialogues. **Synergies - rather than trade-offs** - should guide planning, supported by innovation, private investment, and fair access to marine resources.

Key messages:
- Promote sectoral alliances (e.g., Industrial Alliance under the Ocean Pact) to align economic and environmental priorities.
- Recognise sustainable fisheries, aquaculture and shipping as contributors to conservation when well-managed.
- Attract private investment and enhance access to public funding through risk reduction mechanisms.

Innovation, Workforce Development, and Public Engagement

Driving a **sustainable blue economy** will require continuous innovation, a skilled and resilient maritime workforce, and strong public support. Participants emphasised the need to **invest in clean technologies**, **simplify regulatory barriers**, and **better integrate sectors** like aquaculture, fisheries and seafood processing into marine policy. Public engagement and consumer engagement were seen as essential for aligning market demand with sustainability goals.

Key messages:
- Strengthen education, training, and career pathways to support workforce renewal and resilience in coastal and maritime sectors.
- Accelerate the adoption of sustainable marine technologies through targeted investment and streamlined licensing processes.
- Foster public awareness and behavioural change to build consumer support for sustainable ocean products and practices.

SUMMARY OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESSED DURING THE CONFERENCE

1

Balance Conservation and Sustainable Human Activities
Conservation efforts must align with community resilience and livelihoods to succeed. Incorporating the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) into EU decision-making processes - such as the Oceans Pact - will help balance ecological goals with sustainable development, delivering both **environmental conservation** and **socio-economic benefits**.

2

Advance Inclusive and Ecosystem-Based Ocean Governance
Anchor marine policies in **ecosystem-based approaches** that are equitable and adaptive. Strengthen co-management with fishers, ensure the meaningful participation of local communities, and promote **long-term governance** rooted in collaboration, transparency, and social justice.

3

Align Marine, Environmental, and Industrial Policies
Ensure the Ocean Pact is coherent with existing EU frameworks and sectoral strategies. Avoid siloed policymaking by **harmonising conservation goals** with energy, fisheries, and transport priorities, while upholding strong environmental and social standards.

4

Promote Cross-Sector Synergies in the Blue Economy
Support cooperation between maritime sectors to unlock shared benefits - such as **nature-positive solutions** and **low-impact development**. Recognise the role of sustainable fisheries, shipping decarbonisation, and responsible aquaculture as part of marine conservation when managed effectively.

5

Strengthen Marine Spatial Planning with Robust Data and Regional Coordination
Improve marine spatial planning by integrating future scenarios, ecosystem health indicators, and cumulative impact assessments. Address institutional fragmentation through enhanced **data sharing**, harmonised **monitoring**, and coordinated **planning across sea basins**.

6

Invest in Workforce Skills, Innovation, and Transition Support
Prioritise **skills development** and **generational renewal** in coastal and maritime sectors to sustain socio-economic resilience. Facilitate the uptake of clean technologies by simplifying licensing, reducing investment risks, and ensuring equitable access to funding.

7

Put Fisheries, aquaculture, and coastal communities at the heart of EU ocean governance
Recoginise that these sectors are not peripheral as they are essential for **food security**, **culture**, and **resilience in coastal regions**. Support by the Ocean Pact of inclusive maritime spatial planning, co-management, and fair access to funding and decision-making.