



i3⁴BLUE GROWTH

green innovation for blue growth

Deliverable 3.1

I3 Hub Advisory Service

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Introduction

Task 3.1, "Establishment of an I3 Hub Advisory and Interregional Innovation Support System" aims to design and establish a comprehensive platform that provides advisory and innovation support to project promoters in the preparation and development of interregional innovation and investment projects in the blue economy sector. The I3 Hub Advisory and Interregional Innovation Support System will activate a network of key intermediary organizations and experts, offering technical, business, and investment readiness advisory services.

This network will play a pivotal role in providing tailored support to project promoters, empowering regions and their stakeholders with the necessary expertise and know-how to successfully prepare and develop interregional innovation and investment projects in the blue economy sector.

This platform will also lay the groundwork for future tasks, particularly Tasks 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5 of WP3. The establishment of this network of experts will form the basis for the capacity building program, facilitating business matchmaking and ensuring the successful implementation of subsequent tasks of the project.

The following text will outline the main objectives, the methodology, the establishment as well as the further developments of the I3 Hub Advisory and Interregional Innovation Support System platform.

Objective

The primary objective of the I3 Hub Advisory Service is to provide a one-stop-shop for European project stakeholders to access technical, business, and investment readiness advisory services, as well as training and capacity building programs, to support the preparation and development of interregional innovation and investment projects in the blue economy sector.

The secondary objective of the I3 Hub Advisory Service is to establish an interactive platform where stakeholders from across Europe can connect, interact, and access a range of resources and opportunities. This platform will facilitate collaboration, innovation, and investment in the blue economy sector by:

- Publishing funding opportunities, including EU funding programs, national and regional funding initiatives, and private investment opportunities.

- Sharing project updates and sectoral news, keeping stakeholders informed about the latest developments, trends, and breakthroughs in the blue economy sector.
- Promoting regional capacity building and interregional cooperation, enhancing the capacity of regional stakeholders to develop and implement innovative projects.
- Providing technical, business, and investment readiness advisory services, ensuring that project promoters have access to the necessary expertise to develop successful projects.
- Facilitating networking, business matchmaking, and brokerage opportunities, connecting project promoters with potential partners, investors, and technology providers.

Methodology

To fulfil the abovementioned objectives of the I3 Hub Advisory and Interregional Innovation Support System, the consortium employed the following methodology:

1. **Internal Meetings:** the consortium held several internal meetings to discuss the establishment of the I3 Hub Advisory and Interregional Innovation Support System.
2. **Platform Selection:** considering the lack of budget for creating a paid platform, the consortium decided to create an open LinkedIn group, titled "The Hub for a Sustainable Blue Growth - I34BG."
3. **Group Management:** Clust-ER, the lead partner for this task, initially invited at least one representative from each partner to join the group and made them group managers.
4. **Stakeholder Invitation:** each partner was asked to invite their contacts, stakeholders, experts, investors, and other relevant parties to join the group, giving priority to those already involved in the working groups (Task 2.2 of WP2) as they were already familiar with the project and could see the platform as a continuation of the working groups conducted in May and June.
5. **Regional Stakeholder Engagement:** the partners invited their stakeholders from their respective regions, ensuring a diverse and comprehensive network of experts and stakeholders.
6. **Group Maintenance:** the group managers ensured the smooth operation of the LinkedIn group, including managing posts, comments, and member engagement.

7. **Content Creation and Sharing:** the consortium shared relevant content, including project updates, news, and resources, to keep stakeholders informed and engaged.
8. **Ongoing Evaluation and Improvement:** the consortium continuously evaluated and improved the methodology to ensure it remained effective and efficient in achieving the project's objectives.

By following this methodology, the consortium was able to establish a comprehensive and interactive platform for stakeholders to connect, share knowledge, and access resources, ultimately supporting the development of interregional innovation and investment projects in the blue economy sector.

Establishment of the platform

Rationale

The establishment of this platform is a direct response to the needs and challenges identified during Task 2.2 of the project "Establish Q-Helix strategic working groups for identification of needs/priorities, collaboration and benchmarking of the performance of regional ecosystems" which aimed to understand the needs and challenges of the sectors involving around the two project value chains (firstly Sustainable fisheries, Aquaculture and Valorisation of Biomass; and Coproducts; and secondly Renewable Energy and Maritime Decarbonization). The outputs of the strategic working groups revealed that improving interregional collaborations and access to investment funds are crucial areas for improvement. This platform provides a concrete example of how to bridge these gaps, fostering interregional collaboration and providing a space for stakeholders to stay updated on project ideas and funding opportunities of all kinds.

Key output

The main key output of this task is the creation of a public LinkedIn group, "The Hub for a Sustainable Blue Growth – I34BG" (Figure 1), created on June 7th, 2024, and accessible via the following link: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/9847006/>



Figure 1. LinkedIn group created within task 3.1.

This platform serves as a hub for project promoters, technology providers, and experts to connect, share knowledge, best practices, and insights related to the blue economy sector, with the aim to foster interregional cooperation, innovation, and investment readiness. The group aims to facilitate collaboration, drive innovation, and provide a space for project promoters to seek assistance, share experiences, and explore potential partnerships, collaborations, and investment prospects.

Current Status and Performances

The LinkedIn group was created on June 7th, 2024. As of 26/06/2024, the I3 Hub LinkedIn group has 54 members from across Europe, with 3 posts published, 1989 total post views and 725 active members (i.e. the number of members who visited the group or viewed group posts on LinkedIn home feed in the chosen period).

In terms of growth, the group has seen a steady increase in new member acquisitions, with an average of 16 new members per week. The group has grown by 24% over the past 2 weeks, with a projected growth rate of 50% over the next quarter (Figure 2).

Growth details ⓘ

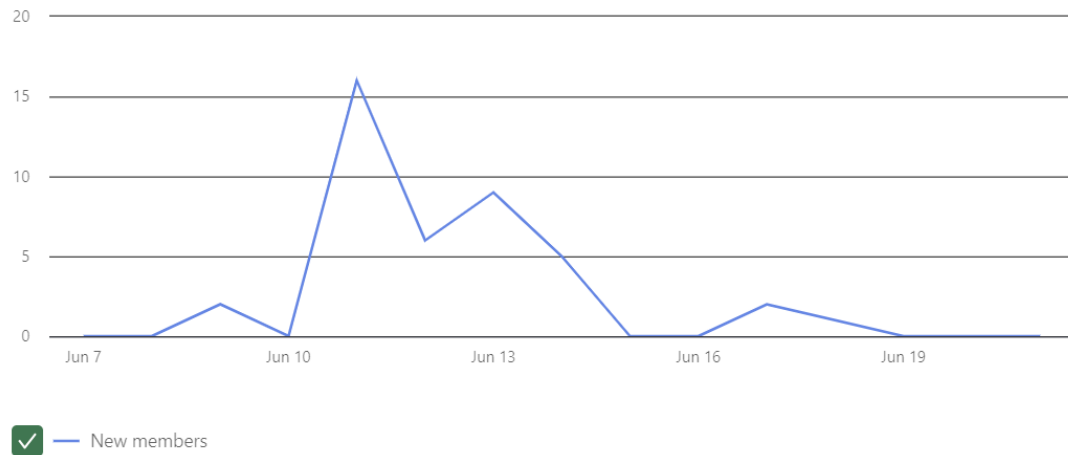


Figure 2. Growth details in terms of new members (data from 7th to 21st June 2024)

The group has seen an average engagement rate of 250% within the past 2 weeks (7-21 June 2024), with an average of 145 active members (7-21 June 2024) (Figure 3).

Growth details ⓘ

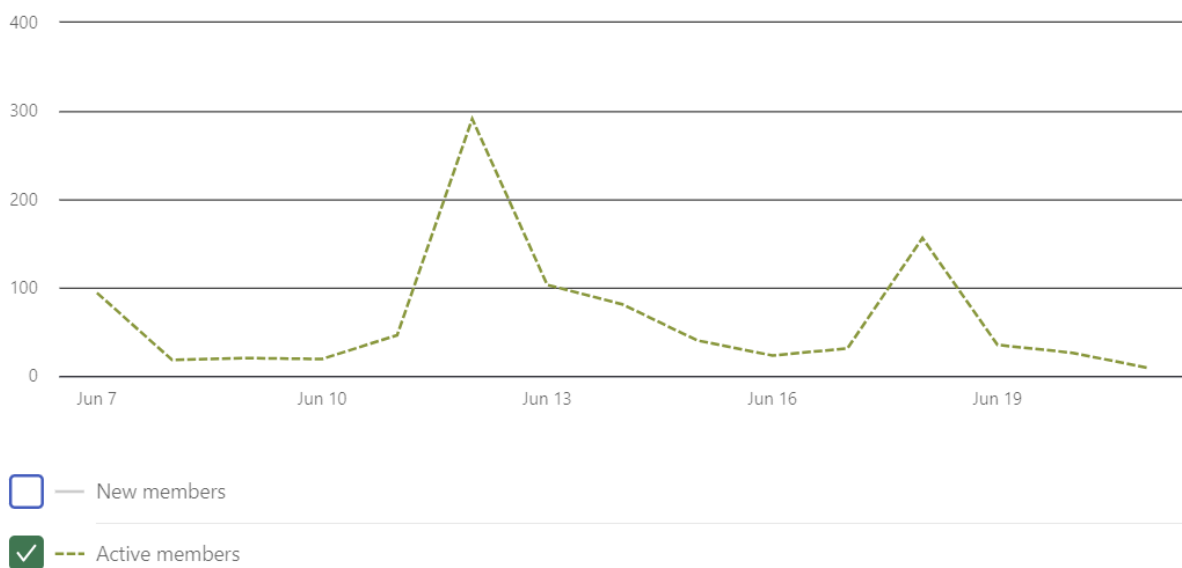


Figure 3. Growth details in terms of active members (data from 7th to 21st June 2024)

In terms of member demographics, the group has a diverse representation of stakeholders from the blue economy sector across Europe, as shown in Figure 4.

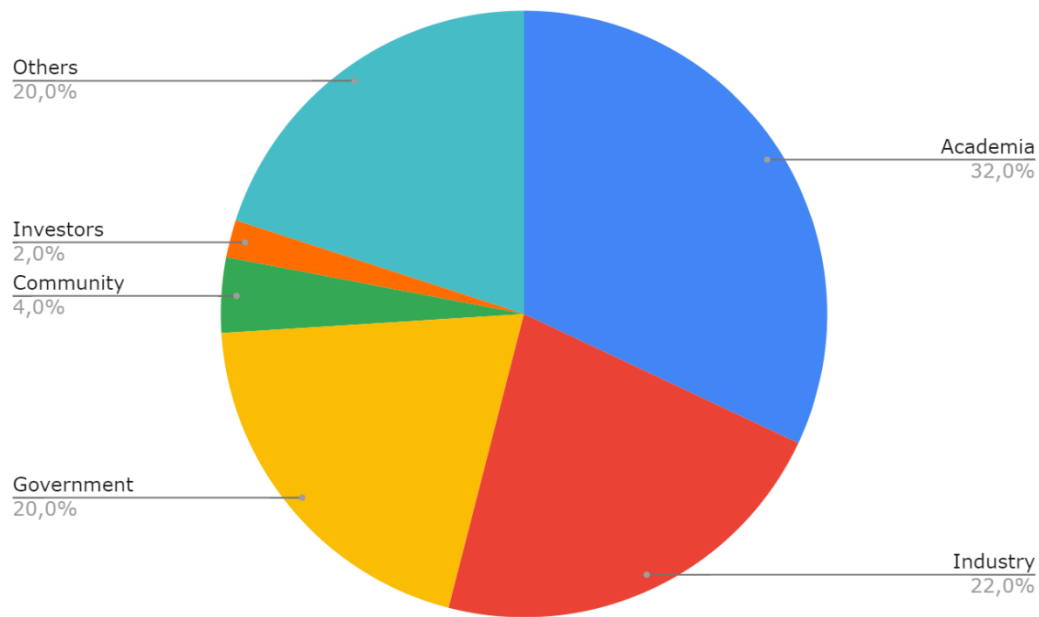


Figure 3. Stakeholder representations in terms of members demographics (industry overview) (data from 7th to 21st June, 2024)

The group is expected to continue to grow in the coming months, providing a dynamic platform for project promoters and technology providers to stay connected and collaborate, share data and useful information on market, trends, topics and other challenges for the future of the blue economy.

Future Actions and Expectations

To ensure the continued engagement of existing members and attract new ones, an average of 4 posts will be published monthly by the consortium members, featuring relevant news, links, updates, and useful resources on sustainable blue growth, research and innovation, as well as investment opportunities. These posts will not only keep members informed about the latest developments in the sector but also encourage them to share their own experiences, insights, and expertise, fostering a sense of community and collaboration.

By maintaining a high level of engagement and activity within the group, the LinkedIn group, as a key networking platform, is expected to represent a valuable resource for partners matchmaking, fostering development of interregional collaboration and investment opportunities in the blue economy sector.

Conclusion

The I3 Hub Advisory Service, supported by the LinkedIn group, will play a crucial role in facilitating collaboration, driving innovation, and providing expertise to project promoters and technology providers in the blue economy sector.

In the next steps of the project, the I3 Hub Advisory Service will actively operate in supporting the expansion and growth of the interregional network of experts and stakeholders, providing support for future project tasks, including the participation in the capacity building programme, workshops and ecosystem visits outlined in the project's further developments.