i34BLUE GROWTH

green innovation for blue growth

Deliverable 5.3

I3 Roadshows

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Acknowledgments

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the organizations in host ecosystems who contributed so richly to the welcoming of the I3-4 Blue Growth visiting delegation and to their willingness to share, exchange and build something new.

Special thanks goes to the staff of host organisations who welcomed the project's delegations to their ecosystems: Merinova, Unknown Group, and Pôle Mer Bretagne Atlantique. The strength of these workshops came from the diversity of expertise represented by these organisations and their capacity to mobilize their networks to promote interregional innovation.

For their support, advice and action, we would like to thank the I3-4 Blue Growth project consortium and the staff of partner organizations, the commitment and quality of their contributions to the work on this was exemplary. Many current and former staff members within their own organizations offered support, guidance and assistance for which they are extremely grateful and without which the workshops would not have been possible. The contributions of ANI as coordinator, Blue Bio Alliance to the communications around the events, and the efforts of CTAQUA, HAMAG BICRO, and the Regional Directorate for Science, Innovation and Development of the Azores (DRCID), BSSC, and CLUST-ER in engaging themselves and their networks for intense and valuable exchange during the ecosystem visits were the motor of its success

Finally, we thank I3-4 Blue Growth project promoters, technology providers and other blue economy ecosystem stakeholders. Their passion, curiosity and commitment to the sustainable blue economy are the force to which we are at grateful service. We hope that the lessons learned and connections forged during these activities will being us into contact again very soon.

Introduction

In I3-4 Blue Growth's pursuit of the objective to reinforce the blue economy ecosystem in priority sustainable value chains, the project's three ecosystem visits and roadshows were core pillars. These international regional missions and cross-visits were aimed at promoting knowledge sharing, dissemination of new knowledge and increase of awareness about new trends, practices and technologies in blue economy. They took place from December 2024

through October 2025 bringing I3-4 Blue Growth partners, project participants and blue economy ecosystem stakeholders to Finland, the Netherlands and France, in regions classified as "more developed" and "in transition." As part of the training and capacity building for regional actors and innovators in blue economy, knowledge transfer and networking were their organizing principles. The roadshows combined company and laboratory visits, thematic workshops, B2B matchmaking and networking activities, with programmes co-designed by host partners to reflect local strengths while responding to the needs and priorities of visiting delegations.

This deliverable (D5.3 – I3 Roadshows) presents the overall approach, content and outcomes of these ecosystem visits. It describes the methodology used to design and implement the roadshows, including the quality criteria applied, programme structures and participant recruitment strategies. It then details the programmes and results of each visit, synthesises participation data and participant feedback, and reports on the impact and results of the action in partner regions. The concluding section draws together lessons learned for future interregional ecosystem visits in the blue economy field.

With the engagement of host ecosystems, project partners and visit participants, the ecosystem visits succeeded in enhancing mutual understanding between blue economy ecosystems, shone a light on promising directions in green innovation for blue growth, and resulted in new interregional connections that promise to unlock future interregional cooperation, investments and business relations.

Methodology

Preliminary Steps and Collaborative Work

In preparation for the first partner meeting, Work Package 5 leader PMBA prepared slides laying out the dependencies and proposed timeline for WP5 activities. A WP5 reference document gathering all relevant grant agreement texts and including the information outlined in presentations regarding project dependencies and timeline was also uploaded to facilitate work package work. Key considerations for the timing of the visits was that the visits had to follow the projects Call for Project Promoters and Open Innovation Challenges in WP3 as organizations from the former would form the core of the visit delegations, while respecting milestones for the actions and with the first visit accommodating the inclusion of in-person B2B

meetings in the framework of task 3.5. This allowed the partners to define a three broad time slots spread out between the final quarter of 2024 and the 3rd or 4th quarter of 2025. The first WP5 meeting amongst Task leaders was held in March 2025 to lay the groundwork for coordinated action in the work package, ensuring a reasonable distribution of tasks and tentative assignment of Thematic Workshops to ecosystem visits on the basis of the organizing partners areas of expertise and the thematic focus of each ecosystem visit. Starting in August 2025, WP5 meetings were held monthly led by PMBA with the participation of task leaders and ecosystem visit hosts as a core group and the addition of all partners in the run up to ecosystem visits.

Quality Criteria

The preliminary phase of WP5 activities allowed for a definition of quality criteria for the tasks, including the ecosystem visits. The quality criteria were:

- Pertinence to engaged stakeholders
- In-person added value: interesting visits/good practices in context, and B2B matchmaking
- Fruitful Connections forged
- Valuable knowledge shared: technological and ecosystemic
- Interregional cooperation boosted

These criteria were considered key to following through on the specific objectives laid out for WP5 and especially:

- O5.1. Promote interregional collaboration and investment opportunities by bringing together business-research innovation and regional development actors in the blue economy field;
- O5.2. Delivery peer learning, exchange and networking activities able to promote opportunities, know-how and expertise exchange among blue economy innovation actors;

Programme Design

Each ecosystem visit was co-designed with the local host at the helm to reflect the specificities of the regional innovation ecosystem while following a common structure. The Merinova team largely set the model running the first of the ecosystem visits with success. A typical

programme combined introductory sessions presenting the local ecosystem and key actors, B2B sessions between visiting and host organisations, thematic workshops on priority topics (e.g. zero-emissions vessels or digitalisation in aquaculture), and field visits to innovation campuses, research centres, public laboratories and businesses. This format was applied, for example, in the ecosystem visit to Brest, where participants visited organisations such as Pôle Mer Bretagne Atlantique, Technopôle Brest Iroise, ANSES and the Breizhmer Applied Research Centre, and took part in a thematic workshop and site visit focused on sustainable aquaculture.

The specific content of the visits was finalised in an iterative process. After validation of dates for the visit amongst the consortium, the host partner sent partners formal invitations including draft or provisional agendas indicating the type of activities and organisations participants could expect to meet during their stay. Once an initial picture of the participants was established via registrations, host partners would then finalize site visit locations and organisations targeted for presentations and B2B matchmaking. Results from satisfaction surveys from preceding ecosystem visits were also taken on board in the planning for subsequent iterations. In the final ecosystem visit, a field was included for specific requests for B2B interlocutors from the host country to further enhance the impact and pertinence of the visit.

Finland

Considering the EnergyVaasa clusters special expertise and strengths in the energy and maritime sectors, it was determined from the start that the visit would be focused on Value Chain #2: maritime renewable energy & decarbonisation of the maritime sector. To optimise their outreach to those companies in their network with the most value to bring and to receive from the events, Merinova finalized their site visit circuit and local stakeholder identification following the confirmation of participants. Given tight time constraints with two nights budgeted per participant and difficult flight schedules, Merinova put an emphasis on building a programme that was dense with encounters with local stakeholders and which managed to take participants to an impressive number of key demonstration sites in the cluster. The ecosystem visit naturally played host to the Thematic Workshop coorganized by Merinova and BSSC around the topic, amongst others, of maritime decarbonisation. Its timing also made it

the ideal venue for the in-person B2B meetings described in Task 3.5 and organized by Blue Bio Alliance..

Netherlands

The rich and diverse local innovation ecosystem in the Netherlands led to granting the Dutch ecosystem visit a dual focus on both value chains in the project. The program was designed to balance best practices with practical collaboration. By incorporating thematic workshops (specifically the ANI-organized workshop on the RIS3T and Unkonwn Group's workshop organized on the topic of digital twins) together with direct company visits, it provided both strategic insights and operational perspectives. Because both value chains were represented during the visit, the program placed strategic emphasis on creating an interactive format that would be relevant and valuable to all participants.

Connecting the program to the startup and ecosystem event Upstream was also a deliberate strategic choice. This ensured the involvement of key industry stakeholders and ecosystem connectors, offering participants a more comprehensive understanding of the Dutch market. The 3000-participant event also included structured B2B sessions, enhancing the potential reach of networking actions pursued by participants.

France

The innovation ecosystem visit to the Pôle Mer Bretagne Atlantique's territory in Brittany and Pays de la Loire, and more specifically in Northern Finistère, tool participants to a region rich with sites and ecosystem actors relevant to both value chains. However, given the Finland visit's focus on VC#2 and the Netherlands visit's blended focus on both value chains, project partners expressed a desire to balance the overall program of ecosystem visits. As such, PMBA focused the visit program on Value Chain #1: sustainable seafood, aquaculture & valorisation of blue resources, while also reaching out to actors in Value Chain #2 and organizations which could give a more global overview of the blue economy ecosystem. The strategy yielded high levels of participation amongst regions with a stronger Value Chain #1 focus. This sectoral emphasis also led to the programming of PMBA's thematic workshop on Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture and Clust-ER Agrifood's workshop on Digitalisation in Aquaculture.

Recruiting Participants

The ecosystem visits were to be comprised of I3-4 Blue Growth partners. One goal of the project and the visits being to build capacity of innovation ecosystems, the roadshows would facilitate mutual learning around supporting innovation and structuring clusters and local value chains. Partners representing less developed regions would in turn recruit participation of up to 5 SMEs each, corresponding to the reference partner's share of the 30 project promoters identified by the call carried out in Task 3.2.

Invitations to the ecosystem visit including a message from the organizer, a tentative visit agenda and a registration form were drafted by the host organization, approved by PMBA and BBA as work package leader and communications partner, and shared to the email list of project promoters on behalf of the project consortium as a whole. ANI, BBA, DRCID, HAMAG BICRO, CTAQUA, and BSSC then followed up with their project promoters to boost registrations and to arrange travel details with those who confirmed.

In practice it was found that not all project promoters were able to join us on the trip. After verification with the project officer, project partners then established a priority list for stakeholders to engage on the visits with travel support. It was as follows

1. Project Promoters

2. Technology providers who were also SMEs from less developed regions

3. Other Technology Providers

4. Other Blue Economy Innovation Stakeholders from the partner's region

5. An additional employee from the above categories in the same order of priority

The priority list was established according to necessity in carrying out project activities and aiding in the realization of its objectives. Engaging technology providers was a means of realizing the matchmaking objectives of Task 3.5 and reinforcing exchanges to facilitate the emergence of new innovation project collaborations and to establish innovation investment pipelines as a broader objective. Other stakeholders engaged including clusters, support organisations or relevant organisations who were not engaged in the earlier stage of the project could serve similar roles and enhance the impact of the project throughout the target regions. Local partners sought confirmation of non-attendance of project promoters before

confirming support to stakeholders from other categories according to the priority established here.

Deviations among the participation of more developed and in transition regions included the non-attendance, due to personnel limitations and in the case of the latter a reduced relevance of Value Chain 2 to its organization and ecosystem, of Unknown Group and Clust-ER Agrifood to the first ecosystem visit. Clust-ER reattributed budget from staff travel for this visit to support the travel of engaged tech providers in subsequent visits, with positive results in building partnerships and contributing to the successful execution of project tasks including T5.1 Thematic workshops, with the contributions of tech providers to the roundtable on digitalisation in aquaculture.

Ecosystem visit hosts mobilized their local networks to contribute to the roadshows by several means including individualized contacts to host visits, website articles and newsletter items and group emails to tech providers from their region. Materials including catalogues of project promoters and tech providers, the list of confirmed participants aided in recruiting relevant interlocutors for B2B sessions and knowledge sharing presentations.

Logistics and Onsite Communication

Logistical arrangements were central to the methodology and were coordinated jointly by the host partner, the WP5 lead, and partner organisations sponsoring participants. For each visit, practical information on travel, accommodation and local transport was compiled and shared with participants in advance, including details on airport transfers, charter buses between the city centre and visit sites, and security requirements for accessing certain research facilities. On site, programmes were structured with clear timing, dedicated guides for field visits and small-group rotations where needed, as in the ANSES visit where participants were divided into four groups rotating through successive workshops.

Communication during the visits was supported by tools such as a dedicated messaging group to centralise updates and ensure smooth execution of the agenda. GDPR rules were followed in communications with participants with an opt-in model was pursued for joining the shared messaging group and BCC'd addresses used when group emails were sent to all participants. In short, the host organisation handling common onsite logistics and reference partners from project regions handled reservations, reimbursements and most micro-level logistical questions

for their national/regional segments of the delegation. This method was implemented smoothly for the first visit and did not lead to communication or logistical failures on any of the ecosystem visits.

Synergies with other European Initiatives

Synergies with other EU-funded actions were pursued repeatedly. As evidenced by the content section of this report, the results of European projects featured often in workshops and company presentations. In two workshops, an explicit cooperation between European projects was established, with the co-organisation of a workshop on digitalization in aquaculture with the Interreg Atlantic Area project Blue Shuttle, and the prominent dissemination of the results of the Horizon-funded Astral project during the workshop on Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture. It was clear in the presentations of innovation actors across all three visits that EU funds and interregional cooperation were essential levers to achieving sustainable blue growth. With these synergies established, the reach of these actions and I3-4 Blue Growth was expanded to wider stakeholder networks.

Follow-Up

It was important for partners that the connections made during ecosystem visits be sustained once participants returned home. Post-visit tailored advisory workshops and other online capacity building actions offered opportunities of sustained engagement, and the I3 Hub for a Sustainable Blue Growth on LinkedIn was consistently promoted and exploited as a channel to reinforce collaborations by posting updates and tagging participating companies. Project partners also brokered post-visit contacts between project promoters, tech providers and local stakeholders who wished to explore opportunities for collaboration. These follow-up actions ensured that ecosystem visits functioned not as one-off events but as catalysts for ongoing interregional collaboration, knowledge transfer and joint project development

Ecosystem Visits Programmes and Contents

Ecosystem Visit Vaasa, Finland

December 10th-11th, 2024

Day 1: December 10th

The morning of the ecosystem visit began with a session of company presentations hosted at Wärtsilä's Sustainable Technology Hub (STH), a site for R&D and innovation in marine and energy industries which served as an ideal setting for discovering the vibrant innovation ecosystem in Vaasa. The I3-4 Blue Growth delegation was treated to a series of presentations giving an overview of the EnergyVaasa cluster and the innovative companies, all I3-4 Blue Growth technology providers, and projects making Vaasa a focal point for sustainable innovation in the maritime and energy sectors and beyond. Marko J. Koski from Technology Centre Merinova Oy served as the MC of the session.

- Kristoffer Jansson from Vaasa Region Development Company VASEK, presented the **EnergyVaasa Cluster**, underlining the strong expertise and world class innovation from companies big and small in a wide range of realms of the energy industry concentrated in and around the city. The cluster's international reach was also highlighted, with 80% of production going to export and the flagship international event Energy Week drawing global

Figure 1 Photo Vaasa Jansson

- Mathias Skytte from **VEO Group** laid out the impact of his company on driving forward sustainability via their automation and electrification technologies with applications in renewable energy and vessel hybridisation.
- Veli-Pekka Salo of **Wapice**, discussed the software company's wide range of expertise in AI & Data Solutions, embedded systems, electronics design and more.
- Miika Reinikka presented the role of his company, **The Switch**, as a leading product supplier for marine electrification with its supply of special electric machines and power electronics systems.

The session was also an opportunity to share the impact and identify areas of collaboration with EU-funded initiatives from the region.

- Kari Valkama from Merinova presented the work of the Erasmus+ funed **Voltage project** to build a skilled workforce for the battery industry through the establishment of Centers of Vocational Excellence.
- Karna Dahal from VAMK University of Applied Sciences presented the **H2Excellence Erasmus+** project, with its creation and implementation of lifelong learning opportunities for skills related to fuel cells and green hydrogen technologies in Europe and beyond.

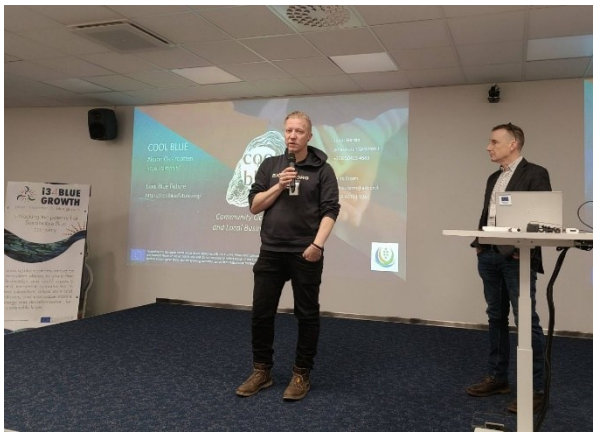

Figure 2 Photo Vaasa Cool Blue

- Mathias Högbacka and Jonas Harald presenting Aktion Österbotten and its commitment to sustainable rural development in Ostrobothnia and their implication in the **Cool Blue project,** pushing forward regenerative ocean farming including production of Andodnta mussels in the Gulf of Bothnia.

The presentations set the stage for the remainder of the visit, situating visitors in Vaasa's areas of innovation, and permitting introductions to companies the group would be visiting the following day. They also provided an ideal insight into organizations that could be met with during the B2B session which followed. This hour-long session, organized in the context of task 5.3, was prepared by gathering preferences for meetings ahead of the visit. A total of 26 meetings amongst project promoters and tech providers were promoted, with additional meetings amongst I3-4 Blue Growth project partners and local stakeholders and these two groups. More details on the results of the session may be found in Deliverable D3.5.

The visit to Wärtsilä STH was also an opportunity to learn more about this I3-4 Blue Growth technology partner's activities and infrastructure. Participants were guided on a tour of the facility with explanations of Wärtsilä's activities in advancing decarbonisation of the maritime and energy sectors.The company's history, global reach and cutting edge technologies were explored, with opportunities for question and answer. An impressive view over the facilities from the STH balcony provided a visual sense of the scale of Wartsila's production and ambition.

A bus then conveyed the I-3 4 Blue Growth team to the port of Vaasa to embark on **Wasaline's Aurora Botnia ferry**. Catarina Fant welcomed the group aboard and guided them to the ferry meeting room for the project's first hybrid thematic workshop. In addition to Fant's presentation of the Aurora Botnia, a cutting edge hybrid propulsion ferry running between Vaasa and Umea in Sweden, Marek Grzybowski of BSSC presented the cluster's activities in pushing forward value chains for Zero Emission vessels in Poland and beyond, and Sari Kola of Merinova led an interactive workshop entitled "Ecosystem Handbook" on optimizing collaboration for innovation. The session was simultaneously conducted online, allowing participants to join us live from the ferry in the Gulf of Bothnia. For more detail on the session, consult Deliverable D5.1 Thematic Workshops.

Following the workshop, Fant guided participants to the observation room of the vessel, where passengers got an up close look at the technology driving the hybrid vessel. With battery power and combustion engines able to use biogas, biodiesel and liquefied natural gas, LNG, the vessel is an inspiring example of maritime decarbonisation, improving the sustainability of this key passenger and cargo link between Finland and Sweden.

As the ferry began its return from Umea to Vaasa, I3-4 Blue Growth project partners, project promoters and technology providers gathered in the ferry's cafeteria for a traditional Finnish Christmas dinner. Local producers were highlighted and seafood featured prominently, giving a blue touch to this moment for social and professional exchange.

Day 2: December 11th

The morning of the visit's second day saw the delegation taken on a circuit of laboratory and research center **Technobothnia** company visits rich with value. An example of the power of academic and institutional collaboration, the laboratory unit is co-owned by University of Vaasa, Vaasa University of Applied Sciences and Novia University of Applied Sciences. From energy technology, to robotics, to electrical laboratories, the tour offered a view of how academic research can be an engine for innovation with effective integration with local economic actors.

The group then received a tour of The Switch guided by Miika Reinikka. Building on the presentation from the previous day, he gave participants insights into the companies products and R&D directions. Participants got the chance to admire up close the company's magnet

machines and generators destined for use in the marine and renewable energy sectors, while receiving insightful responses to their queries from their guide.

Next stop was the Vaasa site of VEO. Company guides began with a full group presentation and safety brief complementing their presentation on the 10th. Then the delegation split into groups to explore the factory. With carbon neutral electrictity and heating and streamlined production processes, the factory produces plethora of high-tech products including switchgears and modular substation buildings.

The final company visit of the road trip took place at the Danfoss factory. Guides took the I3-4 Blue Growth delegation through the facilities of this core industrial player in the Vaasa ecosystem. Participants were given a glimpse at how the company produces the power converters and drives wich make them a global leader in AC/DC and DC/C power conversion and in variable speed control for electric motors. The company also hosted the group for a lunchtime session where they presented their activities and initiatives like the Fossil Free Future program, stimulating green energy innovation in Finland.

Figure 3 Photo Vaasa Group Danfoss

A bus carried a portion of participants to the airport following the rich visit. After a break, those remaining participants were brought to the outer archipelago of Vaasa. The event offered an excellent context for networking amongst participants and additional opportunities for cultural immersion. The evenings program of beer tasting, sauna and sea swimming and dinner offered a memorable coda to the visit and helped participants reinforce the connections they had established over the course of the last two days.

The Dutch Blue Economy Innovation Roadshow

May 20th-22nd, 2025

The second road show in the I3-4 Blue Growth brought participants on a visit to the Netherlands hosted by project partners Uknown Group. The visit highlighted the strength of the Dutch innovation model, particularly its integrated approach connecting municipalities, universities, research institutes, startups, corporates and investors within a coordinated ecosystem. Participants observed how physical innovation campuses, testing facilities, and thematic hubs (e.g., coastal engineering, aquaculture, digitalisation) act as concrete enablers of collaboration and technology adoption. A notable takeaway was the pragmatic emphasis on applied research and real-life demonstration environments, which accelerate market readiness and support industry–academia alignment.

Day 1 - May 20th

The visit opened with a tour of coastal and blue innovation initiatives in **The Hague**, led by Philip Mulder from the Municipality. Participants explored ongoing work in coastal resilience, marine sustainability, and blue-growth planning, including an introduction to Scheveningen's testing and demonstration facilities for real-environment marine technology trials. Cas van de Voort, **WeCo** presented wave-energy and renewable marine solutions, while Jaime Ascencio, **Reefy** showcased nature-inclusive coastal protection technologies. Martin Luxemburg, **Unknown Group** outlined plans for Europe's largest impact campus, emphasising how education, investment, and infrastructure are being aligned to support the regional blue economy.

Day 2 – May 21st

The program continued on Wednesday at **YES!Delft**, a tech startup incubator, where participants engaged in an in-depth session led by Luc Schrover, **TDVG** and Andrew Buskens, **Municipality of Delft**, exploring the region's startup incubation models and technology transfer pathways. Discussions focused on Delft's strong university–industry linkages, support structures for early-stage companies, and mechanisms that enable scientific research to translate into market applications. The visit resulted in valuable exchanges on incubation governance, investment-readiness programs, and cross-border collaboration opportunities for deep-tech startups.

A subset of the group visited **The Kingfish Company**, coordinated by René Tadros, to observe innovative approaches to sustainable aquaculture. The visit demonstrated land-based,

circular production systems with closed-loop water management and high animal welfare standards. Participants gained practical insights into scalable aquaculture solutions aligned with environmental regulations and market-oriented sustainability goals. The session was especially relevant for regions prioritising sustainable food systems and blue bioeconomy value chains.

A separate group visited **Portlantis,** an innovative museum dedicated to the Port of Rotterdam. There, Martin Perez presented the port and its key position in the European and global economy. With 14 million containers per year, the biggest refinery in the world, 3000 private companies and 192,000 jobs, the port is a dynamic juggernaut. This has not kept it from innovating; the terminal is 95% automated and 100% energy self-sufficient thanks to wind and solar power. The port will soon be expanding further, boosting the growth of this flagship example of smart and green port innovation boosting economic growth.

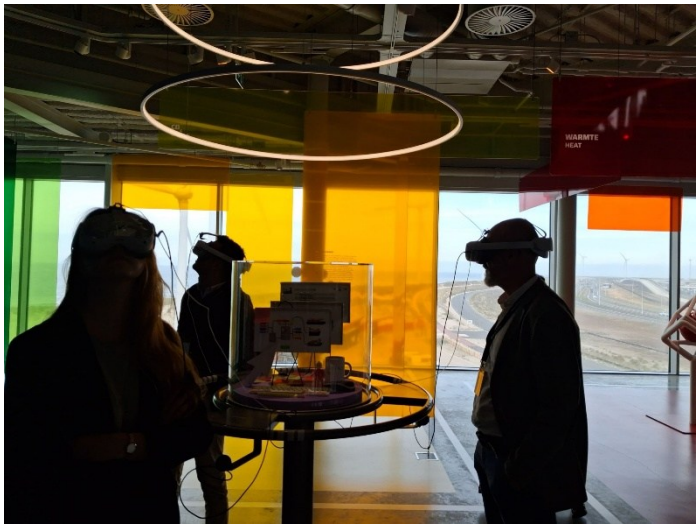

Figure 4 Photo Netherlands Portlantis[2]

At **RDM Rotterdam**, program manager Jouke Goslinga from the **Port of Rotterdam** introduced participants to applied research facilities, port-related innovation programs, and the role of living labs in accelerating industrial transformation. This was complemented by a session with Tom Mulder from **iTanks**, who presented collaborative transition models used to connect SMEs, corporates, and technology developers. The combined visit highlighted how Rotterdam builds industrial decarbonisation, circular technologies, and cross-sector innovation partnerships.

Day 2 drew to a close with Paulo Santos's dedicated workshop on the Cross-border Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3T) for the **Euroregion Galicia–Norte**. The session strengthened participants' understanding of interregional innovation frameworks, with a focus on aligning priorities across borders and mobilising complementary capabilities. Practical exercises and discussions clarified how RIS3T can serve as a platform for future joint projects, shared

technology development, and coordinated investment in strategic value chains, including aquaculture and maritime decarbonisation.

Day 3 – May 22nd

Figure 5 Photo Netherlands Group

The final day of the visit began at Titaan, the campus of Unknown Group, where the visit's second hybrid thematic workshop was held. There, participants attended a hands-on workshop on digital twins facilitated by Nico van der Kolk, founder of **AlbatrosDigital.** The session demonstrated the application of AI-driven simulation tools for offshore renewable energy, marine ecosystems, and infrastructure planning. Through practical examples, participants learned how digital twins can improve decision-making, reduce environmental risks, and support integrated coastal zone management.

The program concluded at the **Upstream Festival** in Rotterdam, a major gathering of investors, accelerators, founders, and innovation policymakers around three industry tracks: Port & Maritime, Health & Wellbeing, and Climate & Energy. Participants joined 3000 fellow attendees and engaged with Dutch ecosystem leaders including Jorg Kop, Robbin Hoogstraten, Lisette Braakenburg van Backum, Bernadeta Karpavičiūtė, Rory Heltzel-Groenen, Lars Crama, and Ohad Gilad from the **Municipality of Rotterdam**. Additional one-to-one matchmaking opportunities connected participants with experts, entrepreneurs, and stakeholders active in the blue economy. The event offered exceptional exposure to market trends, investment dynamics, ecosystem-building practices, and potential collaboration partners.

Ecosystem Visit Brest, France

September 29th - Oct 1st, 2025

The Ecosystem Visit to Brest, France, took place from 29 September to 1 October 2025 and enabled I3-4 Blue Growth project partners and participants to discover the blue economy innovation ecosystem of northern Finistère. Over the course of three days, participants visited innovation campuses, businesses, research centres and public laboratories across four municipalities, took part in workshops, B2B sessions and networking activities, and exchanged on blue economy best practices, collaborative opportunities and future European-funded R&I projects.

Day 1 – September 29th

Participants arrived in Brest on the afternoon of Monday 29 September. Those who arrived early took the opportunity to discover key sights in the city centre, from 18:30 to 22:00 on Monday, the official programme began with a Welcome and Networking Cocktail at La Pam, a nearby "third place" coworking space within walking distance of the hotels. Here, participants were welcomed and Pedro Pires of Loyal Ecosystem led a workshop that helped participants get to know one another and frame the days ahead, by exploring competitive postures available to businesses in the market. Food and drinks followed as participants mingled , making new connections and reviving those made on previous visits.

Day 2 – September 30th

On Tuesday morning participants were shuttled to the Pôle Numérique Brest Iroise, located on the innovation campus of the Brest metropolitan area. The session held there provided an overview of the innovation ecosystem of Pôle Mer Bretagne Atlantique and north Finistère and to stimulating discussions on blue economy best practices and paths for collaboration. After a welcome coffee, there was a presentation of the ecosystem and an overview of local actors, featuring a word of welcome from Pôle Mer Bretagne Atlantique director Phil Monbet and presentations prepared for the occasion by Brest Métropôle. The presentations welcomed participants to a major hub of scientific excellence and economic activity across multiple sectors of the blue economy and expressed the value of interregional cooperation and high hopes for fruitful connections resulting from the visit.

The session provided an occasion for the delegation to learn about and meet members of the Pôle Mer Bretagne Atlantique from across the Brittany and Pays de la Loire Regions. A session of pitches gave an overview of these key players.

- Olivia Lahens presented the **Campus Mondial de la Mer** and its initiatives catalyzing local and international collaboration between marine and maritime science and industry with major events like Ocean Hackathon® and Sea Tech Week®.
- Morgane Le Meur presented the **Technopôle Brest Iroise** and its rôle in boosting the local business and innovation community while reaching European impacts with projects like the Interreg Atlantic project SaferSEA, supporting the maritime industry in key transitions, and Science Comes to Town, bringing science closer to citizens in cities across Europe.
- Véronique Bonnier presented **iDMer**, the technical and innovation center based in Lorient with 30 years of experience and expertise in the valorisation of food products and co-products, including marine biological resources, through agri-food and biotechnological processes.
- I3-4 Blue Growth Technology Provider **Zéni** was pitched by Jean-Michel Pommet, who
- laid out the Saint-Nazaire-based startup's innovative nature-based solution using microalgae to treat industrial wastewater while producing valuable biomass.

Figure 6 Photo Brest Pommet

- Charlotte DuPont of **BiOceanOr,** based in Nice, gave participants a quick overview of the company's data-driven water quality forecasting and correlation services to the aquaculture industry ahead of her contribution to the upcoming thematic workshop.

Following this rich sampling the local blue economy innovation ecosystem, each I3-4 Blue Growth visit participant was given an opportunity to introduce themselves and their organisations. This gave all present the chance to help identify opportunities for one-to-one exchanges before moving into **B2B sessions**. During this time one-to-one exchanges were

brokered between all participants on the basis of previously expressed interest and potential complementarities identified.

A coffee break followed, with an opportunity to admire the mouth of the harbour of Brest, and the morning closed with a thematic workshop on the topic of digitalisation in aquaculture, co-organised as a Blue Skills Classroom of the Interreg Atlantic project Blue Shuttle. The session was organized and moderated by Elisabetta Leoni of **Clust-ER**, with perspectives on trends, challenges and solutions in this innovation area offered by Massimo Bellavista of **Legacoop Agroalimentare Nord Italia**, Luisa Pasti the **University of Ferrara** and Charlotte Dupont of **BiOceanOr**. Participants engaged with the speakers in a rich back and forth discussion following their presentations.

Lunch was provided by La Crevette Bleue, a business committed to a local, eco-responsible and committed approach that highlights the products of inshore and seasonal fishermen. A tasty and fitting sustainable seafood interlude that highlighted the flavours of the local blue economy.

The afternoon saw the road show's first site visit. The group travelled to the Ifremer site at the Technopôle Brest Iroise to visit to the **ANSES** Labs. There Thierry Morin and his team toured the I3-4 Blue Growth delegation around the Fish Virology, Immunology & Ecotoxicology Unit and National Reference Lab for listed fish diseases of the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety. Hosts guided participants through the various facets of the site, including rainbow trout breeding and ecotoxicology facilities, experimental facilities and water treatment systems, the FORTIOR genetics platform, and the laboratory activities. This structured rotation gave participants an understanding the scope of ANSES's research and its contributions to knowledge and solutions for the blue bioeconomy.

The group then travelled west to Porscave on the Aber Ildut to visit **the Breizhmer Applied Research Centre (CRAB)** in Porscave. Isabelle Thomas presented Breizhmer's work on behalf of the sectors associated with seafood products in Brittany on the site's balcony

overlooking the ria. Meanwhile, Ricardo Gonzalez gave participants a tour of the research center's facilties, from its innovative and sustainable water pumping and heating system to its experiments on improving the cultivation of European flat oyster, to its photobioreactors for phytoplankton and its growing strain library looking to identify promising indigenous inputs to restorative aquaculture. The visit was an occasion for photos of the local scenery and an evening greater flurry of questions and exchanges around the science on display and prospects for cooperation and further mutual learning.

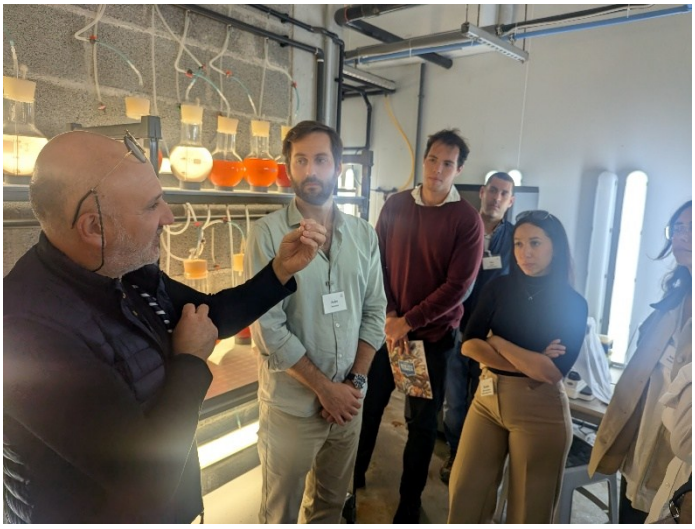

Figure 7 Photo Brest Gonzalez and Delegation

After the bus returned to Brest and a break allowed participants to digest the information gathered throughout the day, participants reconvened for a social dinner at Le Ruffé. At this historic staple of the local restaurant scene committed to serving local, sustainable and seasonal food, participants continued exchanges begun during the day in a relaxed setting and deepened connections among partners and visitors.

Day 3 – October 1st

On Wednsday morning, the delegation headed north to **France Haliotis** in Plouguerneau. After a welcome coffee, the group gathered alongside participants online for the final thematic workshop of I3-4 Blue Growth focused on Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture (IMTA). Participants heard how IMTA is put into practice at France Haliotis from founder and host for the day Sylvain Huchette. They also examined resources produced by the Horizon funded project ASTRAL, before launching into a discussion on commercialisation and how IMTA fits into the future of sustainable aquaculture.

Following the workshop, the group was treated to a tour of France Haliotis itself, gaining insight into the company's seaweed and abalone production in Plouguerneau and its vision of responsible and sustainable aquaculture. Questions and contacts were exchanged as

participants explored the site. The session concluded with a tasting of sautéed abalone and chips seasoned with seaweed on the farm.

With many participants departing in the early-to-mid afternoon. The group boarded the charter bus directly to the train station. Picnic lunches were organised to adapt to individual schedules and preferences. Participants with later flights were able to enjoy a convivial picnic in a nearby park.

Figure 8 Photo Brest France Haliotis Group

For those who remained, opportunities to discover the bue innovation ecosystem were not yet over. In the mid-afternoon, participants boarded the Brest's now emblematic cable car route to the 70.8 Museum, "un musée pour l'océan," located at Les Ateliers des Capucins in Brest. This visit offered an opportunity to discover a museum dedicated to ocean science and maritime innovation, providing a glimpse into the wide and diverse work of marine science in the region while also conveying the texture of urban life at this emblematic Brest site.

The ecosystem visit concluded at 19:30 with a final dinner at La Croisette on the Port of Brest, fittingly held on the water's edge. Over this closing meal, participants reflected on the three days of visits, workshops and exchanges, consolidating relationships and identifying next steps for collaboration within European maritime innovation networks.

Participation Data and Feedback

Quantitative Data

The I3 roadshows drew a diverse group of visiting participants and host organisations from across the value chains targeted by the project. While the number of organizations directly involved in the visit programs fell below the KPI of 100 total companies, each visit engaged an average of 36 organisations and overall 72 unique organisations took part in the ecosystem visits. Furthermore, data for contacts made outside the formal, documented framework of the ecosystem visit is not easily quantified. If, for example, we make the modest assumption that each individual visitor to the Dutch ecosystem visit made at least 1 contact

outside the official list of I3-4 Blue Growth participants during the B2B meetings of the Upstream Festival, the number of organizations reached by the action increases to at least 111.

On a subjective, qualitative basis, feedback often indicated that ecosystem visits were very richly programmed and packed a large number of visits and related company encounters into a short period of time. Levels of reported satisfaction were high. Both indicated a high value for time was achieved for participants.

Table 1 Participation Data

	Visitor Organization Individuals	**Host/Local Organization Individuals**	**Total Individuals**	**Organizations Represented**
Finland	23	21	44	28
Netherlands	39	14	53	45*
France	37	14	51	41
Average	33	16	49	36
			Total Unique Organisations	72

**Figure does not include connections made with the other 3000 participants of the Upstream Festival*

Qualitative Data and Survey results

Based upon the activity objectives and quality criteria defined at the outset of the project uniform satisfaction surveys were drafted by PMBA and shared with participants via the ecosystem visit messaging group at the conclusion of the visit. The questionnaire gauged the respondent's satisfaction with the ecosystem visit program, execution and results. Following the first ecosystem visit to Finland, short answer questions were added where participants could indicate results coming out of the events for them, facilitating consortium follow up. The results of these surveys (see figures below) were overwhelmingly positive. See figures below

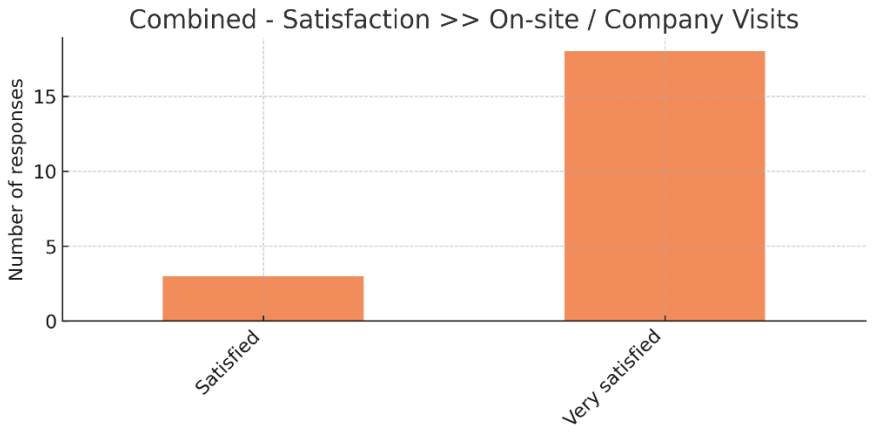

Figure 9 Graph Satisfaction Company VIsits

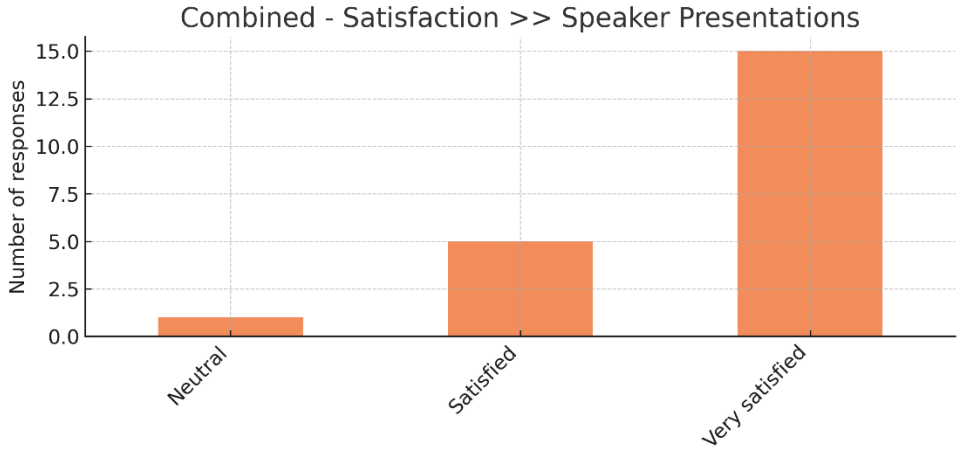

Figure 10 Graph Satisfaction Speaker Presentations

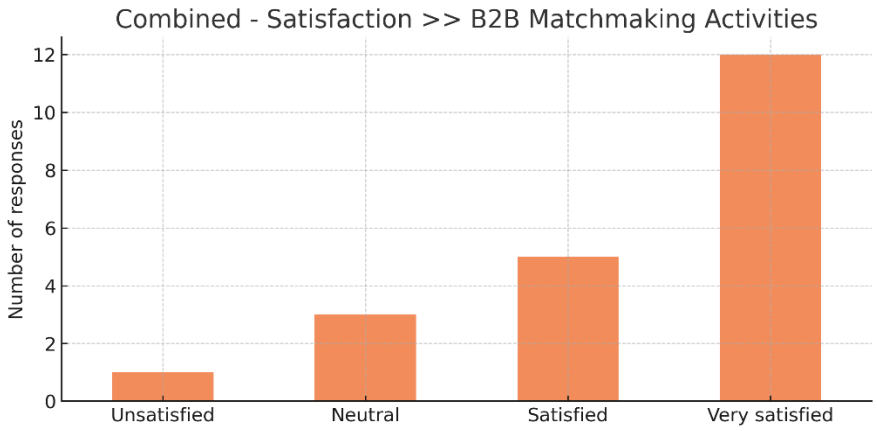

Figure 11 Graph Satisfaction B2B Matchmaking

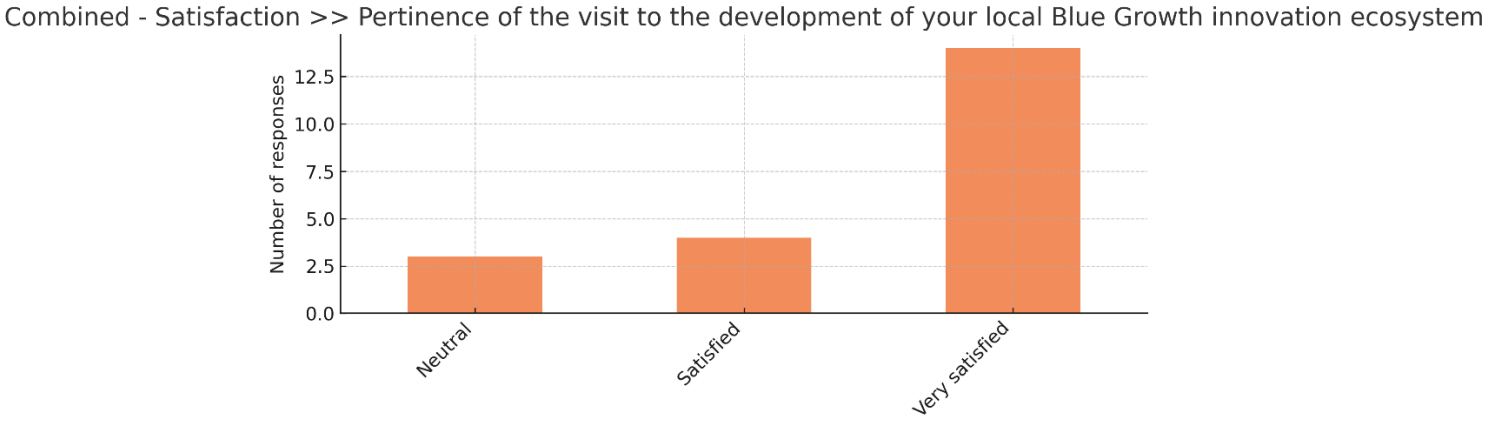

Figure 12 Graph Satisfaction Pertinence Ecosystem

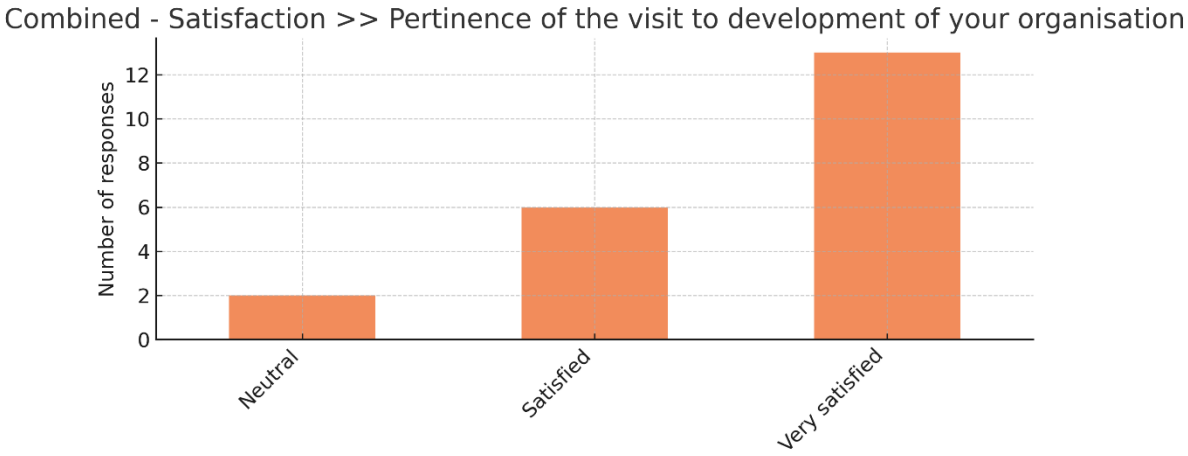

Figure 13 Graph Satisfaction Organisation

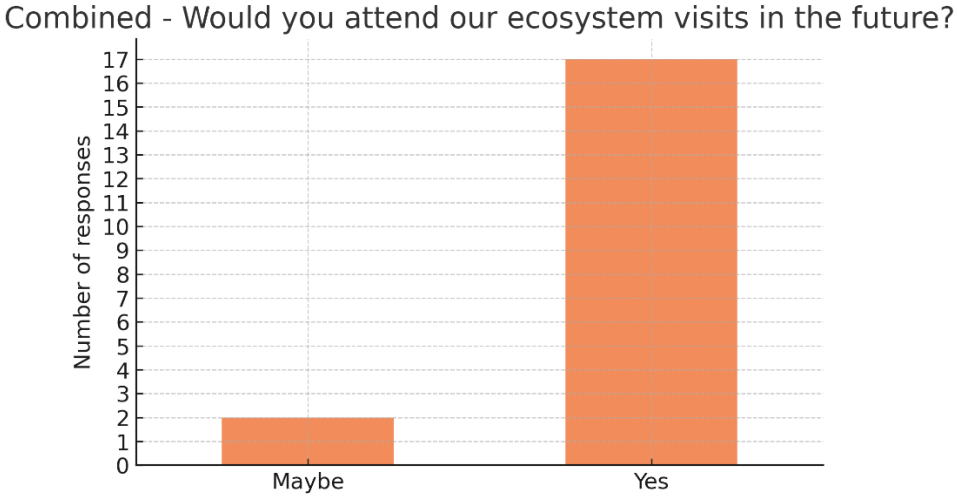

Figure 14 Graph Would you attend again?

On the parameters measured, on a scale from very dissatisfied to very satisfied, participants to the ecosystem visits responded very satisfied or satisfied the vast majority of the time. The

only respondent to respond unsatisfied, was a project partner who expressed, in the open portion, that more structured opportunities to work together and meet eachother should be organised at the beginning of the ecosystem visit sessions.

The open answer field for points for improvement garnered quite heterogeneous responses, reflecting a diversity of preferences in the makeup of visit programmes. A preference for longer visits at each stop emerged following the first visit, while others desired, as indicated in the previous comment, more formally structured B2B brokerage sessions. After the second ecosystem visit, attendees expressed a desire for shorter presentations from speakers. These comments were taken on board in subsequent sessions, with the Upstream festival in the Netherlands offering structured B2B meetups, and the opening workshop and cocktail in Brest providing an opportunity for participants to break the ice, discuss their businesses, and get to know one another in a space conducive for conversation with multiple attendees. Time dedicated to presentations was reduced in the French ecosystem visit and a strong preference for in-person speakers was maintained to ensure in-person added value.

It should be noted that scant responses were gathered for the French ecosystem visit, perhaps due to the practice of creating separate forms, one for each Thematic Workshop and one for the ecosystem visit as a while

Throughout these surveys responses can be found messages of satisfaction and of impact, reinforcing the positive results of the satisfaction queries: "Thank very much for everything. Grest job! keep going on as well as you have done so far!" "It was good organization," "Good contacts for improving business," "Validated three aspects of our startegy through networking and conversations with other players and guest speakers. Identified a potential partner in the food industry to transform our seaweed biomass." "Knowledge + Ideas + opportunities" were among the feedback.

The absence of negative answers to the question of whether participants would participate in another ecosystem visit with the project team in the future was a strong sign of global satisfaction as well.

Organisations Involved in Finland Visit

Table 2 Organisations Finland Visit

Organisation	Country	Type
A. Silva Matos Metalomecanica SA	Portugal	SME (Project Promoter)
Agovi Metalomecânica	Portugal	Tech Provider
Aktion Österbotten	Finland	Ecosystem Stakeholder
Andalú Sea Robotica Submarina	Spain	Tech Provider
Andalucian Maritime Marine Cluster	Spain	Ecosystem Stakeholder
ANI	Portugal	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
BALTIC SEA & SPACE CLUSTER	POLAND	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
BlueBio Alliance	Portugal	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
CNK Centrum Nowych Kompetencji	Poland	SME (Project Promoter)
CTAQUA	Spain	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
Danfoss Drives	Finland	Technology Provider
HAMAG-BICRO	Croatia	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
Jel-tom	Croatia	SME (Project Promoter)
Merinova	Finland	I3-4 Blue Growth Partner

Pôle Mer Bretagne Atlantique	France	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
SEAentia	Portugal	SME (Project Promoter)
seaExpert, Lda	Portugal-Azores	SME (Project Promoter)
Sensaway	Portugal	Tech Provider
Technobothnia	Finland	Ecosystem Stakeholder
TECNOALGAE S.L.	SPAIN	SME (Project Promoter)
The Switch	Finland	Technology Provider
Vaasa Region Development Company VASEK	Finland	Ecosystem Stakeholder
VAMK University of Applied Sciences	Finland	Technology Provider
VEO Group	Finland	Technology Provider
Via Kornel	Croatia	SME (Project Promoter)
VPGR / DRCT	Portugal-Azores	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
Wapice	Finland	Technology Provider
Wasaline	Finland	Ecosystem Stakeholder

Organisations Involved in the Netherlands Visit

Table 3 Organisations Netherlands Visit

Organisation	Country	Type
A. Silva Matos MetalomecÃ¢nica SA	Portugal	SME (Project Promoter)
Agovi MetalomecÃ¢nica	Portugal	Tech Provider
AlbatrosDigital	Netherlands	Local Ecosystem Stakeholder
Andalú Sea Rob´otica Submarina	Spain	Tech Provider
ANI - National Innovation Agency	Portugal	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
Aquaponics Iberia	Portugal	SME (Project Promoter)
Aquatic Biotechnology	Spain	Tech Provider
BALTIC SEA AND SPACE CLUSTER	Poland	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
Blennius SCA	Spain	SME (Project Promoter)
BLUEBIO ALLIANCE	Portugal	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
Centro Tecnológico de Acuicultura de Andalucía (CTAQUA)	Spain	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
Clust-ER Emilia-Romagna Agrifood	Italy	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
Cluster Maritimo y Marino de Andalucía	Spain	Cluster
CTAQUA	Spain	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
Drops & Bubbles Tecnología S.L.	Spain	SME (Project Promoter)

Organisation	Country	Type
Euroregion Galicia–Norte	Portugal	Workshop Speaker (Online)
Experimental Station for Food Preserving Industry	Italy	Tech Provider
Eyecon Group	Portugal-Azores	SME (Project Promoter)
HAMAG-BICRO	Croatia	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
HAMAG-BICRO	Croatia	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
iTanks	Netherlands	Local Ecosystem Stakeholder
Jeltom	Croatia	SME (Project Promoter)
loyal ecosystem	Portugal	Ecosystem Stakeholder
Merinova	Finland	Ecosystem Stakeholder
MobyFly	Portugal	SME (Project Promoter)
Municipality of Delft	Netherlands	Local Ecosystem Stakeholder
Municipality of Rotterdam	Netherlands	Local Ecosystem Stakeholder
Numar	Portugal	Startup
Platforma22 ltd	Croatia	SME (Project Promoter)
Pôle Mer Bretagne Atlantique	France	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
Port of Rotterdam	Netherlands	Local Ecosystem Stakeholder
Reefy	Netherlands	Local Ecosystem Stakeholder
SEA CRAS d.o.o. (SeaCras)	Croatia	SME (Project Promoter)
SEAentia	Portugal	SME (Project Promoter)
Seaexpert	Portugal-Azores	SME (Project Promoter)
Sensaway	Portugal	Tech Provider
TDVG	Netherlands	Local Ecosystem Stakeholder
TECNOALGAE	SPAIN	SME (Project Promoter)
The Hague Municipality	Netherlands	Local Ecosystem Stakeholder

Organisation	Country	Type
The Kingfish Company	Netherlands	Local Ecosystem Stakeholder
Trisolaris Advanced Technologies, Lda	Portugal-Azores	SME (Project Promoter)
University of Bologna	Italy	Regional Network - Research Center
Unknown Group	Netherlands	I3-4 Blue Growth Partner
VPGR / DRCT	Portugal-Azores	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
WeCO	Netherlands	Local Ecosystem Stakeholder

Organisations Involved in the France Visit

Table 4 Organisations France Visit

Organisation	Country	Type
Agovi Metalomecânica	Portugal	Technology Provider
AGRIFOOD CLUST-ER	Italy	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
Andalu Sea Robotica Submarina	Spain	Project Promoter
ANI	Portugal	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
ANSES	France	Local Ecosystem Stakeholder
Aquaponics Iberia	Portugal	Project Promoter SME
BALTIC SEA AND SPACE CLUSTER	Poland	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
BIOceanOr	France	Local Ecosystem Stakeholder
Blennius SCA	Spain	Project Promoter SME

Organisation	Country	Type
BLUEBIO ALLIANCE	Portugal	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
Breizhmer	France	Local Ecosystem Stakeholder
Campus Mondial de la Mer	France	Local Ecosystem Stakeholder
CMMA_Andalusian Maritime Marine Cluster	Spain	Innovation Ecosystem Stakeholder
Comité Régional de la Conchyliculture Bretagne-Nord	France	Local Ecosystem Stakeholder
Congelados Apolo S.L	Spain	Project Promoter SME,
CTAQUA	Spain	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
Dominion consulting d.o.o.	Croatia	Project Promoter SME
Esteros de Canela, S.A.	Spain	Innovation Ecosystem Stakeholder (SME)
Eyecon - Software, Lda.	Portugal-Azores	Project Promoter SME
France Haliotis	France	Local Ecosystem Stakeholder
Haedes	Portugal	Technology Provider
HAMAG-BICRO	Croatia	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
Horta Dos Peixinhos	Portugal	Project Promoter SME
iDMer	France	Local Ecosystem Stakeholder

Organisation	Country	Type
jel-tom	Croatia	Project Promoter SME
Legacoop Agroalimentare Nord Italia	Italy	Technology Provider
Loyal Ecosystem	Portugal / Netherlands	Technology Provider
Merinova	Finland	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
Numar	Portugal	Project Promoter SME
Platforma22	Croatia	Project Promoter SME
SeaCras (Sea Cras d.o.o.)	Croatia	Technology Provider
SEAentia	Portugal	Project Promoter SME
seaExpert	Portugal-Azores	Project Promoter SME
Sensaway	Portugal	Technology Provider
Technopôle Brest Iroise	France	Local Ecosystem Stakeholder
TECNOALGAE	Spain	Technology Provider
Trisolaris Advanced Technologies, Lda	Portugal-Azores	Project Promoter SME
Università di Ferrara - Laboratorio Terra&Acqua Tecg	Italy	Technology Provider
Unknown Group	Netherlands	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
VPGR / DRCT	Portugal-Azores	I3-4 Blue Growth Project Partner
ZENI	France	Technology Provider

Results and Impacts by Region

As a supplement to information gathered via the feedback forms and in exchanges following the visits, project partners were invited to reflect on the results and impact of the ecosystem visits from the vantage point of the closing weeks of the project. What emerges below is a landscape of mutual learning, opportunities for collaboration and promising directions for interregional innovation in each of the project partners' regions.

ANI (Portugal)

Results for your organization and stakeholders regarding interregional collaboration and investment opportunities

All: The visits enabled the identification of concrete areas for interregional collaboration and potential joint investment opportunities. Strengthened connections with European partners laid the groundwork for future innovation initiatives.

Netherlands: Numar established a partnership with Cira, the Italian research institute.

France: HAEDES made multiple contacts for future collaborations. NUMAR made contacts with France Haliotis.

Results for your organization and stakeholders regarding opportunities, know-how and expertise exchange

All: The exchange of know-how and expertise provided valuable insights into best practices, enhancing the team's capacity to apply innovative approaches locally. It also fostered mutual learning among regions facing similar challenges.

General Remarks regarding takeaways from the Ecosystem Visit (e.g. comparative learnings from innovation ecosystem)

All: The visits offered a comparative understanding of diverse innovation ecosystems, highlighting effective governance and collaboration models. They reinforced the importance of linking public policy, academia and industry to accelerate sustainable innovation.

BBA (Portugal)

.Results for your organization and stakeholders regarding interregional collaboration and investment opportunities

Overall:

BBA: Meet new ecosystem and stakeholders, opportunity to connect with relevant stakeholders in PT in the VC2.

Stakeholders: Opportunity to collaborate for future projects based on green transition supporting blue economy.

Results for your organization and stakeholders regarding opportunities, know-how and expertise exchange

Overall: BBA: Meet new ecosystem and stakeholders, opportunity to connect with relevant stakeholders in PT in the VC2.

Stakeholders: Opportunity to meet ecosystem players, best practices and case studies, Knowledge transfer

General Remarks regarding takeaways from the Ecosystem Visit (e.g. comparative learnings from innovation ecosystem)

Overall: In person activities are key for trust and cross collaboration. Previous matchmaking work between stakeholders to ignite conversation is strategic for more effective collaboration during the visits.

BSSC (Poland)

Results for your organization and stakeholders regarding interregional collaboration and investment opportunities

Finland: As a result of the meeting, members of the Baltic Sea and Space Cluster learned about new organizations and stakeholders that create the potential for further interregional cooperation. New investment opportunities and the potential for joint investment initiatives related to the green economy and renewable energy were identified.

Netherlands: As a result of the meeting, members of the Baltic Sea and Space Cluster learned about new organizations and stakeholders that create the potential for further interregional

cooperation. New investment opportunities and the potential for joint investment initiatives related to the green economy and renewable energy were identified.

France: As a result of the meeting, members of the Baltic Sea and Space Cluster met new organizations and stakeholders that create the potential for further interregional cooperation. New investment opportunities and the potential for joint investment initiatives related to the green economy, seafood production, seafood logistics, ecology, and the protection of ocean fauna and flora were identified.

Results for your organization and stakeholders regarding opportunities, know-how and expertise exchange

Overall: As a result of the meeting, members of the Baltic Sea and Space Cluster gained new knowledge in the field of local content development in maritime industries, development and implementation of innovations in the cluster, and had the opportunity to exchange experiences on the implementation of projects related to the development and implementation of ecological solutions in maritime industries, ports and maritime transport, and seafood production.

General Remarks regarding takeaways from the Ecosystem Visit (e.g. comparative learnings from innovation ecosystem)

Overall: Information published after the visit generated considerable interest among members of the Baltic Sea and Space Cluster. Particular interest was expressed in activities within maritime and energy clusters, collaboration between science, business, government, and local communities, and leveraging cluster synergies to create innovations in the maritime transport, seaports, and seafood industries.

Posts:

I3-4 BLUE GROWTH PROJECT MEETING, VAASA FINLAND, MERINOVA

I3-4 Blue Growth – NL Ecosystem Visit in Den Haag and the Port of Rotterdam

next stop: **Brest, France**!

Clust-ER (Italy)

Results for your organization and stakeholders regarding interregional collaboration and investment opportunities

Netherlands: The action has proved to be successful with regards to renewed networking and new possibilities in joint actions in the Blue Economy sector. Tech providers has detected several opportunities at the EcoSystem visit in Rotterdam, through the exchange of opportunities among participants. The meeting has enabled CLUSE-R to find new potential partners in view of future projects and partnerships related to the green transition in the blue economy.

France: "Touch with hands" a new ecosystem and have the opportunity to connect with partners and stakeholders presenting their activities and products/services

Meet new potential partners in view of future projects and partnerships related to the green transition in the blue economy

Results for your organization and stakeholders regarding opportunities, know-how and expertise exchange

Netherlands: ClustE-R had the possibility to join forces and collaborations with members and not members active on Blue Economy and to provide possibilities to other for networking. SSICA, one of the ClustE-R Tech provider that participated to the Rotterdam Ecovisit, has been asked by BluBio Alliance its availability to provide knowledge and expertise to some of the SMEs involved, acting as the technology provider and specialist in the areas of interest. The interest came especially from Numar (their meeting was held in Rotterdam during the Ecosystem Visit). After a positive reply on availability from SSICA (Giovanna Ficano), the specific tailored session for BG Project Promoters will take place on the 20th of November 2025: the workshop, entitled 'Seaweed-Based Research Activities in the Seafood Products Area' will explore seaweeds as a marine source of bioactive molecules and nutrients and potential uses and human health benefits of using seaweed-based products, led by STAZIONE SPERIMENTALE PER L'INDUSTRIA DELLE CONSERVE ALIMENTARI (SSICA).

France: C-ER: co-organize with BBA the workshop "Digitalisation in Aquaculture" (30 Sept) so as to share with the project partners, promoters and providers the respective experiences and

best practices in Aquaculture 4.0, focusing current trends, future challenges and suggested solutions

Stakeholders: meet ecosystem players, focus best practices and case studies, transfer ideas and knowledge

General Remarks regarding takeaways from the Ecosystem Visit (e.g. comparative learnings from innovation ecosystem)

Netherlands: The Ecosystem visit in Rotterdam has proved to be a successful meeting, both in terms of networking among project promoters and tech providers: the ClustE-R tech providers find it quite useful in connecting with SMEs and other organisation. In particular the bilateral meetings have been particularly interesting for future joint activities (i.e. SSICA and Numar found their possible collaboration as feasible in the future). The visit in some of the innovation ecosystem area and examples has been very interesting and enlightening (in terms of innovation and national policies on these topics), ClustE-R will bring them as examples in future activities among partners active in the Blue Economy.

France: The ecosystem visits and generally speaking the in-person activities let partners and stakeholders, both private and public, to focus and realize the main recurrent and arising issues to be faced, so to improve and strengthen cooperation for common objectives and projects

The matchmaking between all parties involved in the chain (in this case for the sustainability in aquaculture) is a fundamental key-point: both before the in-person activities/visits so to focus and prepare the know-how matching, and during the in-site for constructive meetings and conscious conversations between the parties

The visits gave the opportunities to know and compare different innovation levels and solutions, highlighting possible mutual cooperation models

CTAQUA (Spain)

Results for your organization and stakeholders regarding interregional collaboration and investment opportunities

Finland: We have gained first-hand knowledge of the technological innovation system and some very interesting companies in the field of sustainable marine energy. It has been particularly interesting for our technology provider ANDALU SEA ROBOTICS, which has established a channel for collaboration on future projects.

Netherlands: We have gained first-hand knowledge of the technological innovation system and some very interesting companies in the field of energy tidal and submarine ROVS. Overall, the visit to main Seriola lalandi in Europe farm. Another Tech supplier was very interested in Dutch ecosystem about biotechnology and IA solutions. It has been particularly interesting for our project promoter BLENNIUS, which has established a channel for collaboration on future projects.

France: This ecosystem has been very interesting, useful and beneficial for CTAQUA because we have made contact with several companies in Portugal, France and Italy with whom we can explore participation in IMTA and seaweed projects. We have contacted the representative of the most important professional association of oyster producers in Croatia, which is very interesting because another species of oyster is also cultivated in Andalusia. We have also contacted a company that provides services for the prevention of marine pollution episodes caused by phytoplankton through remote sensing. A development company has contacted several companies in the Brest region.

Results for your organization and stakeholders regarding opportunities, know-how and expertise exchange

Finland: It has been an opportunity to learn about the organisation of one of the world's leading technological innovation clusters in sustainable marine energy. The main interest stems from the transfer of wind turbines compatible with the installation of offshore marine aquaculture farms. The visit to this ecosystem has been particularly relevant and interesting for the technology provider ANDALU SEA ROBOTICS because it has opened up a channel of communication with two Croatian companies.

Netherlands: We have met and contacted some very interesting SMEs in the country to participate in European consortia.

France: We have contacted the representative of the most important professional association of oyster producers in Croatia, which is very interesting because another species of oyster is

also cultivated in Andalusia. We have met and contacted some very interesting research centres in the country to participate in European consortia.

General Remarks regarding takeaways from the Ecosystem Visit (e.g. comparative learnings from innovation ecosystem)

Finland: The form of associationism among technology companies in Finland is interesting because they are highly specialised without creating competition between themselves. Spain should learn from this strategy, which is based fundamentally on two aspects:

1. Geographical: this competitive advantage because it is located around countries with high purchasing power (Northern Europe and Russia).

2. Strategic: they have committed to the internationalisation of their products and services, supported by remote technology.

Netherlands: We visited Europe's leading company in the farming of Seriola lalandi, a species with great economic potential for aquaculture. Thanks to the visit, we were able to learn about some of the disadvantages of RAS farming and areas for improvement for companies in Andalusia that use RAS technology.

France: We have found that aquaculture companies in France face the same challenges as those in Andalusia: the challenge of farming conditions altered by climate change, the commitment to innovation in the marketing of their products, and the threat of products from third countries with fewer legal requirements in all aspects, including health and production.

DRCT-VGPR (Portugal-Azores)

Results for your organization and stakeholders regarding interregional collaboration and investment opportunities

Finland: Engagement with other European SMEs helped expand the partnership network of the Azorean enterprises, setting the stage for future innovation-driven initiatives. Participation in the visits was fundamental for fostering meaningful connections with the identified stakeholders from all regions participating in the project. These connections opened promising avenues for future cooperation, particularly in areas aligned with the green transition and the sustainable development of the blue economy.

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Results for your organization and stakeholders regarding opportunities, know-how and expertise exchange

Overall: Through direct and in person engagement with peers from other regions, regional stakeholders gained access to diverse perspectives, practical insights, good practices and transferable expertise. The exchanges not only broadened the understanding of effective strategies and processes but also encouraged the adaptation of tested solutions to local realities. For DRCID, the visits were also fundamental to understand good practices that other entities have such as how their work is organized and structured, how priorities are identified, the relationship with other actors in the ecosystem, and the best pathways to achieve their objectives.

General Remarks regarding takeaways from the Ecosystem Visit (e.g. comparative learnings from innovation ecosystem)

Overall: The ecosystem visits offered a way to observe and compare different regional innovation models, revealing how governance structures, stakeholder coordination, and policy alignment shape outcomes. These in-person experiences proved essential for building trust, fostering genuine collaboration, ensuring productive exchanges and allowing participants to move beyond introductions and into meaningful dialogue around shared challenges and scalable solutions.

HAMAG BICRO (Croatia)

Results for your organization and stakeholders regarding interregional collaboration and investment opportunities

Finland: The visit to Finland provided valuable exposure to one of the most advanced marine innovation ecosystems in Europe, especially in areas of offshore renewable energy, digital maritime technologies, and sustainable aquaculture. Participants gained insights into how Finnish clusters structure collaboration between research organisations, SMEs, industry players and policy actors. Discussions enabled the identification of good practices, operational models and transferable solutions for blue economy implementation in other regions. Importantly, there were initial conversations about potential collaboration on the development of a prototype vessel, connecting a Croatian SME (via Kornel) with a Finnish SME, with promising commercial and technological potential. The ecosystem visit also contributed to expanding networks and building trust between organisations, supporting future participation in interregional consortia and EU funding instruments. Stakeholders expressed strong interest in exploring joint solutions for green transition, maritime engineering, and coastal infrastructure. Overall, the mission strengthened cooperation channels and laid the foundations for practical innovation partnerships.

Netherlands: The Netherlands ecosystem visit highlighted strong examples of university–industry cooperation, advanced innovation management, and early-stage financing mechanisms that support the scale-up of maritime and blue tech businesses. Participants were able to observe how Dutch incubators, clusters, and investment facilitation entities align expertise, infrastructure, and capital for high-impact innovation. Several SMEs and research centres were identified as potential partners for future collaboration, particularly in areas such as digital ocean solutions, aquaculture monitoring, and nature-based coastal protection. The direct engagements also helped stakeholders better understand how matchmaking and technical support are integrated into entrepreneurial ecosystems. The meetings reinforced the value of structured networking missions for building long-term trust and creating joint project opportunities. Overall, the Dutch visit broadened strategic cooperation channels and advanced interregional innovation readiness.

France: The visit in France offered valuable insights into how blue economy innovation is advanced through strong policy alignment, cluster coordination, and collaboration between industry, research institutions, and technology providers. Stakeholders learned how French regions integrate research, funding instruments, regulatory frameworks, and market deployment, especially in blue biotechnology, aquaculture, and maritime engineering. The meetings allowed participants to compare governance models, strengthen knowledge transfer, and identify opportunities for cooperation under EU funding schemes. The visit inspired the development of support pathways for technology validation and piloting, while also reinforcing professional networks and opening new channels for future collaboration.

Results for your organization and stakeholders regarding opportunities, know-how and expertise exchange

Finland: The visit to Vaasa enabled HAMAG-BICRO to explore how the Finnish innovation hub brings together large companies, SMEs, research actors, and technology providers to jointly accelerate blue and green economy solutions. Meetings with ecosystem facilitators such as Merinova and EnergyVaasa provided insight into how hubs coordinate advisory support, testing facilities, prototyping, and cooperation between companies. Discussions also opened opportunities for collaboration between Croatian and Finnish SMEs, including exploring joint development of a prototype vessel concept. Overall, the mission strengthened knowledge exchange, expanded interregional networks, and increased readiness for future cooperation on innovation-driven initiatives.

Netherlands: The Netherlands visit provided HAMAG-BICRO and its stakeholders with valuable exposure to a highly connected innovation hub model, where technology providers, research organisations, startups, investors and policy actors work together to accelerate blue economy solutions. Through visits to Campus@Sea, YES!Delft, RDM, the Port of Rotterdam, and participation in the Upstream networking event, participants observed how practical collaboration, hands-on workshops, and matchmaking activities support technology transfer, investment readiness and pilot development. The experience helped identify relevant approaches that could be replicated in Croatia, particularly in areas such as innovation governance, digitalisation of marine ecosystems, entrepreneurship acceleration, and linking SMEs with research and investment partners. Overall, the visit helped strengthen knowledge

exchange, expand strategic networks, and build future opportunities for interregional cooperation in blue economy innovation.

France: The Ecosystem Visit in Brest provided HAMAG-BICRO with valuable insights into how the French innovation ecosystem connects SMEs, research institutions, public laboratories, and industry through thematic workshops, guided tours, and B2B sessions. Participants engaged in knowledge exchange on topics such as Aquaculture 4.0, digitalisation, and Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture, observing how research and business are linked to pilot demonstrations and commercialization pathways. Visits to facilities including ANSES, Breizhmer Applied Research Centre and France Haliotis showcased practical models for technology validation, sustainability, bioresource valorisation, and sectoral collaboration. The mission also helped establish new networking channels, strengthening opportunities for future interregional cooperation and knowledge transfer in blue economy innovation.

General Remarks regarding takeaways from the Ecosystem Visit (e.g. comparative learnings from innovation ecosystem)

Finland: The ecosystem visit in Vaasa provided valuable insights into how a mature and well-connected blue and energy innovation ecosystem operates in practice. Participants observed how collaboration between industry leaders, SMEs, research institutes, and public stakeholders is structured to accelerate co-creation and technology deployment. The visit demonstrated the strength of multistakeholder cooperation, where large companies such as ABB, Hitachi, Wärtsilä, The Switch, and Schneider Electric work closely with smaller technology providers, universities, and laboratories in a coordinated innovation environment

Netherlands: The visit to the Netherlands provided an opportunity to experience a dynamic and well-connected blue economy innovation ecosystem, where industry, research, and technology stakeholders actively collaborate. Participants observed how innovation hubs such as Campus@Sea, Yes!Delft and RDM facilitate knowledge exchange, technology piloting and business scaling through workshops, networking and matchmaking. The experience highlighted the Dutch strengths in ecosystem coordination, stakeholder engagement, and support for digital and offshore renewable solutions that can be adapted in other regions.

Overall, the mission helped deepen interregional cooperation and expand opportunities for future collaboration in sustainable marine innovation

France: The visit to Brest showcased how France's blue economy ecosystem successfully integrates SMEs, large companies, research institutions, and public agencies to drive innovation across aquaculture, marine biology, and maritime technologies. Participants gained practical insights during site visits to ANSES laboratories, the Breizhmer Applied Research Centre, and France Haliotis, which demonstrated how research and industry collaborate in real-world settings. The workshops on Aquaculture 4.0 and Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture highlighted transferable practices and innovative approaches relevant to both Value Chain 1 and cross-sector cooperation. Overall, the mission provided valuable opportunities for learning, networking, and identifying future collaboration pathways in sustainable blue economy innovation.

Merinova (Finland)

Results for your organization and stakeholders regarding interregional collaboration and investment opportunities

Netherlands: The visit was fruitful for Merinova, as we could observe and learn from The Hague and Rotterdam Startup ecosystems

France: For us we got a good contact for Mr. Alessio Caracci from Unknown Group. It was also fruitful to see how sea cluster works in Brittany - we can always utilize this kind of benchmarking data when developing our own cluster.

General Remarks regarding takeaways from the Ecosystem Visit (e.g. comparative learnings from innovation ecosystem)

This is a wonderful way of connecting people on different levels from different ecosystems.

PMBA (France)

Results for your organization and stakeholders regarding interregional collaboration and investment opportunities

Finland: The Pôle Mer reinforced its ties with project partners while gaining further insight into the needs of project participants, while the areas in which collaboration with the Vaasa ecosystem around renewable energy and marine decarbonization was ongoing and could be further developed were identified.

Netherlands: The Pôle Mer made numerous contacts with companies and other organisations of interest between local stakeholders and its members in France. These resulted both from formal presentations and more informal exchanges facilitated by the visit.

Results for your organization and stakeholders regarding opportunities, know-how and expertise exchange

Finland: Vaasa was shown to be an essential ecosystem with potential for knowledge exchange around its key competencies in the energy transition. Events like Energy Week have been noted for their potential to bring valuable learnings and connections to members of our network.

Netherlands: Opportunties and key interlocuters in the areas of defense, ports, and marine renewable energies were identified. Interest was established in seeking out future participation in upcoming events in the region for the Pôle Mer or for its members.

General Remarks regarding takeaways from the Ecosystem Visit (e.g. comparative learnings from innovation ecosystem)

Finland: The most interesting point of comparison between Vaasa and the Pôle Mer's Network is the highly sectorial specialised focus on energy in the region. The role large corporations can play in structuring value chains and creating the conditions for a thriving ecosystem of research and small businesses was instructive.

Netherlands: The entrepreneurially dynamism of the region was on clear display throughout the visit. The way this culture permeated the region was striking and complementarities in innovation directions between our ecosystem were identified

Remarks on French Ecosystem Visit Impact on Local Ecosystem

The Pôle Mer and local stakeholders were extremely gratified to see the quality of engagement of I3-4 Blue Growth visitors. They brought to the table interesting, innovative and in many cases complementarity directions for blue economy innovation to our own. The quality of our

exchanges and the pertinence of questions concerning the knowledge and practices of our stakeholders was excellent. By the end of the visit, we felt our ecosystem was better understood by participants and we remarked a large number of requests for contact that we hope will bear fruit and perpetuate the productive interregional collaboration amongst our ecosystems.

Unknown Group (Netherlands)

Results for your organization and stakeholders regarding interregional collaboration and investment opportunities

Netherlands: The visit strengthened interregional collaboration pathways by connecting participants with potential partners in the Dutch blue economy innovation ecosystem, particularly in the areas of sustainable aquaculture, coastal engineering, marine digitalization, and industrial transitions. In addition to the opportunities for the participants to connect at Upstream, collaboration discussions emerged amongst the participants.

France: The participantion brought results on at least 3 levels: 1) On a first level, it allowed our organisation to learn about the Brest innovation ecosystem, which has a strong focus on ocean technologies and is at the forefront of R&D in the field of blue growth. Such specialisation is reflected in the number & quality of EU projects involving institutions and innovation players in the region (presented during a workshop on Tuesday). Such excellence in EU projects is of great interest also for Unknown and the following networking/ matchmaking event allowed us to establish valuable connections with the stakeholders behind such projects. 2) On a second level, the visit allowed our organisation to collect more feedback from the SMEs & startups involved in the NL ecosystem visit. For an organisation like ours, it is key to maintain a close collaboration with the founders and the 2-full day event in Brest allowed us to speak with many of them and learn about their positive experience in the Hague earlier this year. 3) On a third level, the visit provided us with a view of what impactful companies are building in Bretagne, understand their challenges and the reality of the local business ecosystem for SMEs and startups.

Results for your organization and stakeholders regarding opportunities, know-how and expertise exchange

Netherlands: Participants gained valuable insight into the Netherlands' integrated approach to innovation. The exchanges highlighted technology transfer and incubation models, marine and coastal engineering best practices, digital tools for environmental management, and ecosystem-building strategies. The visit facilitated meaningful peer learning and best-practice transfer.

France: 1) New connections with local innovation stakeholders relevant for future transnational collaboration opportunities, including in EU-funded projects. 2) New understanding of the overall business & innovation ecosystem of Bretagne.

General Remarks regarding takeaways from the Ecosystem Visit (e.g. comparative learnings from innovation ecosystem)

Finland: Given the limited resources of the team, unfortunately, we were unable to attend the ecosystem visit in Finland

France: The visit was organised around a very intense calendar of workshops and visits that compressed numerous learning & networking opportunities in just 2 days.

Remarks on Netherlands cosystem Visit Impact on Local Ecosystem

Netherlands: The visit contributed to raising the visibility of the Dutch blue and industrial innovation ecosystems within the broader European context. It also reinforced internationalisation objectives for local stakeholders by positioning The Hague–Delft–Rotterdam corridor as a reference model for integrated innovation governance.

France: The visit was organised around a very intense calendar of workshops and visits that compressed numerous learning & networking opportunities in just 2 days.

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

The I3-4 Blue Growth roadshows have demonstrably fulfilled their core objectives of promoting interregional collaboration, peer learning and opportunities for joint innovation in the blue economy. Across the three ecosystem visits, the project successfully exceeded its KPI for participation, engaged a wide range of actors from SMEs and technology providers to cluster organisations, public agencies and research institutions, and exposed them to concrete examples of maritime decarbonisation, sustainable aquaculture and blue bioeconomy

innovation. Participant feedback confirmed high overall satisfaction with the pertinence of topics, quality of presentations and opportunities for networking, indicating that the roadshows responded well to the expectations and needs of the target audiences.

Experience accumulated over the sequence of visits also generated important lessons on programme design and delivery. Partners underlined the added value of dense, well-structured programmes that combine site visits, thematic sessions and informal networking, while emphasising the need to preserve sufficient time for open exchanges and B2B interactions. Feedback led to progressive adjustments in workshop formats, including shorter, more interactive sessions and stronger links to participants' concrete business and ecosystem development challenges. The roadshows further highlighted the importance of careful pre-event matchmaking, flexible logistics and clear communication tools (such as shared messaging groups) to maximise the impact of in-person activities.

Looking ahead, the roadshows offer a scalable model for future interregional cooperation in the blue economy. The connections forged during the visits are already translated into follow-up bilateral discussions, participation in tailored advisory workshops, joint project ideas and emerging investment opportunities, supported by ongoing interaction through the I3 Hub for a Sustainable Blue Growth and other communication channels. Building on the lessons learned, future initiatives should further integrate ecosystem visits with complementary online capacity-building, strengthen links with other EU-funded actions, and continue to target both value chains in a balanced manner. In this way, the I3-4 Blue Growth roadshows can be seen not as fruitful for our ecosystems in the short term, and as catalysts for a longer-term process of collaborative innovation, contributing to more resilient, sustainable and interconnected blue economy ecosystems across Europe.