



Coalition of Waterfront Cities, Regions and
Islands

Deliverable 1.3 Coalition Member Journey

WPI, T1.3.1 Coalition Member Journey

January 2026

Authors: Adrienne Evans (Technopolis Group), Guillaume Malite
(Technopolis Group)

Report Information

Project Title: Coalition of Waterfront Cities, Regions and Islands

Project Acronym: CO-WATERS

Grant Agreement Number: 101215165

Deliverable: D1.3 Coalition Member Journey

Related Work Package: WP1

Related Tasks: All WPs

Lead Organisation: Technopolis Group

Authors: Adrienne Evans (Technopolis Group), Guillaume Malite (Technopolis Group)

Report Contributors: Nerea Aranbarri Kortabarria (Climate KIC); Kira Cerjak (Climate KIC); Liane Girier-Dufournier (ICLEI); Alice Guittard (ATHENA); Deborah Navarra (NTNU); Halina Rachelson (ICLEI); Clea Prieto (LGI)

Internal Reviewers: Maria Loloni (Climate KIC), Ana Nava Tazo (ERRIN)

Submission Date: 30/01/26

Dissemination Level: Public

Disclaimer

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or CINEA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Table of Contents

1.	Who can join the Coalition?.....	8
2.	Why join the Coalition?.....	8
2.1	Benefits by Member Type.....	8
2.2	Impacts of Coalition services	10
3.	How to join the Coalition?	11
3.1	Joining the Coalition.....	11
4.	What services are offered?.....	11
4.1	Overview of services	11
4.2	Details on services	12
4.2.1	Networking and peer learning	12
4.2.1.1	Thematic Working Groups and Knowledge Exchange Workshops	12
4.2.1.2	Twinning.....	13
4.2.2	Hands-on training	13
4.2.3	Stakeholder engagement.....	14
4.2.3.1	Blue Climathons.....	14
4.2.3.2	Local Stakeholder Engagement Workbook	15
4.2.4	Guidance on funding & financing.....	15
4.2.4.1	Financing guide & webinars.....	15
4.2.4.2	Pitch & Connect session	16
4.2.5	Mission Ocean & Waters Label	16
5.	Where to find further information.....	17

List of Tables

Table 1: Overview of member types and benefits10

Abbreviations and Acronyms

- EU: European Union 5
- MOW: Mission Ocean & Waters
- MOW Label: Mission Ocean & Waters Label
- NGO: Non-governmental organisation
- SMEs: small & medium-sized enterprises
- WP: Work Package
- EC: European Commission

Executive Summary

This document outlines the Coalition of cities, regions, islands and ports for the Mission Ocean and Waters and its services for potential members - both waterfront cities, regions, islands and ports and the diverse stakeholders supporting them in their sustainable blue transition. It aims to clearly and succinctly communicate services, benefits and expectations for potential Coalition members.

The sections cover 'who can join the Coalition'; 'why join the Coalition'; 'how to join the Coalition'; 'what services are offered'; and 'where to find further information'.

The Coalition Member Journey aims to be the central point for this information. It will be complemented by a one-page visual brochure. It is also a live document, to be continuously updated as the Coalition evolves (e.g. services being adapted in line with member needs).

Introduction

CO-WATERS is a Horizon Europe project (2025-2029) empowering waterfront communities to lead the transition to clean, healthy and resilient marine and freshwater systems. Backed by 17 partners, including six Pilot areas, the project brings together key stakeholders into a Coalition of cities, regions, islands and ports for the Mission Ocean and Waters, and supports them with various services to reach the objectives of key EU blue frameworks and strategies like the EU Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030”, the European Ocean Pact and the Water Resilience Strategy.

CO-WATERS aims to build a strong, connected community of key actors in the ocean and water space, ranging from (public) authorities of cities, regions, islands and ports to universities, businesses, NGOs, investors, associations and networks supporting these in their local journeys to reach the Mission Ocean and Waters objectives. The tailored services offered by CO-WATERS include networking and peer learning, interactive training, citizen and stakeholder engagement, funding advice, and support for communities to earn the Mission Ocean and Waters Label through the development of strong transition plans and on-the-ground action. All services are co-created in collaboration with cities, regions, islands, ports, and a wider network of stakeholders, throughout the project.

The Coalition of cities, regions, islands and ports for the Mission Ocean and Waters (MOW) – developed and animated by CO-WATERS and supported by its networking, knowledge exchange and support services – will seize the momentum and make the bridge from the first to the second implementation phase of the Mission Ocean and Waters.

1. Who can join the Coalition?

The Coalition includes two types of members: “core members” and “supporting members.” Both members have access to all Coalition services, but “core members” may be prioritised for some services (see section 4.0).

Waterfront cities, regions, islands and port authorities in the EU and [Associated Countries](#), or entities representing these authorities, are eligible to be “core members.”

All other organisations, including but not limited to: local authorities outside of the EU and Associated Countries; research and academia; nonprofits, NGOs and community associations; businesses and business clusters; and donors, funding and financing organisations are considered “supporting members.”

The Coalition aims for an inclusive membership, welcoming authorities and organisations who might be advanced in their sustainable blue transition journey and have participated in many blue transition and Mission Ocean and Waters initiatives, but also those who might be starting their sustainable blue transition journey now.

Peer exchange is encouraged - all members, regardless of membership type, will engage with one other via Coalition services.

2. Why join the Coalition?

2.1 Benefits by Member Type

The services (see section 4.0) provide various benefits to the Coalition members. The table below provides examples of some, but not all, benefits offered by the Coalition, depending on your type of organisation.

Member type	Type of organisation	Key benefits
Core member	Waterfront cities, regions, islands and port authorities in the EU and Associated Countries	The Coalition supports waterfront cities, regions, islands and ports in accelerating their sustainability transitions through networking and peer learning, hands-on training and tailored support, local stakeholder engagement and guidance on funding. It recognises the efforts of leading authorities via a Mission Ocean & Waters Label.
Supporting member	Authorities <u>not</u> in the EU or Associated Countries	The Coalition can provide learning opportunities, such as exchanges with EU peers.
	Research and academia	The Coalition provides access to insights from on-the-ground implementation, helping align research with realities of local authorities across the EU.
	Non-profits, NGOs and community organisations	The Coalition can help build capacity on issues such as stakeholder engagement and learn from others' efforts for place-based blue transitions.
	Businesses, business clusters	The Coalition can help authorities to deepen their understanding of existing business solutions and on how to adapt their governance approach. Further, the Coalition can help businesses to gain visibility at EU and local levels.
	Donors, funding and financing organisations, investors	The Coalition can help identify authorities' funding needs to inform funding and financing programmes and can bridge the gap by supporting authorities to be investment ready.

Table 1: Overview of member types and benefits

2.2 Impacts of Coalition services

The Coalition's services are designed to deliver results that reflect the diversity of local authorities, with a variety of priorities from blue economy to coastal resilience; capacities ranging from internal coordination to stakeholder engagement; and contexts in terms of geography, environment, socioeconomics and political authority / governance.

Examples of potential impacts are provided below.

- A coastal city is facing rising tourism pressure and erosion risks. The city strengthens its internal coordination and stakeholder engagement skills through Coalition training. It decides to adapt proven coastal management solutions learned from a peer city from Coalition Twinning programme. It works in collaboration with coastal stakeholders to implement the solution. As a result, the city reduces erosion risks and promote the coastal economy, with wide public acceptance.
- An island struggles with marine litter, exacerbated by tourism. Through Coalition trainings, they improve stakeholder engagement and communication. They also run a Coalition-supported Blue Climathon to crowdsource solutions - such as zero-waste beach initiatives - to be piloted with community groups and SMEs. As a result, the island reduces marine litter and develops its sustainable tourism industry.
- A region is confronted with increasing pollution pressures on its freshwater sources. A peer from the Coalition Twinning programme helps the region identify relevant governance models and technical solutions to reduce nutrient runoff and industrial pollutants. Coalition financial guidance allows it to build a multi-year investment package that leverages EU, national, and regional funds. Acquiring the Mission Ocean and Waters Label offers institutional recognition at EU level, validating the region's progress and improving its attractiveness for funding. As a result, the region is able to significantly reduce pollution.

3. How to join the Coalition?

3.1 Joining the Coalition

Joining the Coalition is quick and easy, requiring only a simple five-minute sign-up form. You can then choose which services to engage in (detailed in section 4). Upon completing the form, you will receive an introduction email on ongoing services, and you will be kept informed about future services yet to be launched. It allows you to explore the Coalition and position yourself for deeper engagement over time.

When joining the Coalition, you must provide one or more staff representative(s) who are interesting in participating in Coalition services. It is recommended, but not required, for the staff representative(s) to match the following profiles:

- Role:
 - Staff with transversal view of organisation (e.g. Mayor's office);
 - Staff with operational expertise in line with Coalition services (e.g. business development, stakeholder engagement); or
 - Staff working on ocean & waters thematics (e.g. blue tourism, conservation) with desire to reinforce transversal skills
- Language: [B2 English](#) in order to follow the services which will primarily be delivered in English

4. What services are offered?

4.1 Overview of services

The Coalition will offer a “menu” of services listed below. These services will be offered on various timelines; access to some services may require a filling out a (simple) application form. You select how many services to engage in.

All services are aligned with the Mission Ocean & Waters Label to support those who wish to apply in their journey. The Label recognises the commitment and achievements of cities, regions, and islands in advancing the objectives of the Mission Ocean and Waters (see section 4.2.5).

Services are open to all Coalition members. When services are oversubscribed, however, priority will be given to core members.

- Networking and peer learning
 - Thematic Working Groups
 - Knowledge Exchange Workshops
 - Twinning Programme (application required)
- Hands-on training
 - Interactive trainings (application required)
- Local Stakeholder engagement
 - Blue Climathons (application required)
 - Stakeholder engagement workbook
- Funding and financing
 - Funding and Financing guide
 - Webinars on accessing funding and financing
 - ‘Pitch and connect’ session between Coalition members, investors, solutions providers (application required)
- Mission Ocean & Waters Label - technical assistance and obtention of Label (application required)

4.2 Details on services

4.2.1 Networking and peer learning

4.2.1.1 Thematic Working Groups and Knowledge Exchange Workshops

The Coalition will provide dedicated online spaces to facilitate cross-fertilisation between Coalition members throughout the whole project duration. The online spaces range from Working Groups on specific topics to longer, interactive knowledge exchange (“Sensemaking”) workshops.

The Working Groups, hosted 2-4 times per year and facilitated by Coalition partners, serve as collaborative spaces around the practical dimensions of local transformation – such as policy and governance, stakeholder and citizen engagement, funding and finance – while drawing on inspiration from EU and global best practices.

The “Sensemaking” (interactive knowledge exchange) workshops will take place once per year, facilitating the exchange of on-the-ground, practical experiences of Coalition members and integrating experiences

from the first 20 MOW Label applicants and all Working Groups, where possible.

The Working Groups and Sensemaking workshops will be launched at the end of Q2 2026.

4.2.1.2 Twinning

The Twinning Programme is a structured peer-learning mechanism designed to foster direct collaboration, mutual support, and shared problem-solving among Coalition members.

Coalition members can access one or more of the three twinning components:

- online platform – a dedicated space for connection with other peers;
- twinning clinics – practical online exchanges between peers on challenges to blue transition journeys; and
- twinning pairs – structured relationships consisting of online exchanges and an optional on-site study visit (funding available for up to 7 visits).

The online platform and pairing will be made available in June 2027 to June 2029 and the clinics from January 2028 to June 2029. While participation to the online platform and twinning clinics is ad hoc, becoming a twinned pair requires a brief application and time commitment (several meetings and optional study visit).

4.2.2 Hands-on training

The Capacity Building Programme equips Coalition members with the knowledge, methodologies, and practical tools required to prepare robust Transition Plans and, for those interested, to advance towards the Mission Ocean & Waters (MOW) Label.

Four online modular trainings are offered, covering systems thinking fundamentals; stakeholder relationships (multi-actor co-creation processes and facilitation skills for stakeholder engagement); and technical skills with a focus on sustainable finance for MOW topics.

These interactive trainings combine peer learning with hands-on exercises grounded in participants' territorial realities, supporting the

translation of learning into concrete action. The trainings will be supported by online support spaces and, where applicable, support sessions with dedicated mentors.

The first wave of trainings will take place from September 2026 to April 2027. A second wave will take place between from September 2027 to April 2028. Participation in trainings requires a brief application, and each training is estimated to take 8–15 hours in total, distributed across 4-6 consecutive weeks.

4.2.3 Stakeholder engagement

4.2.3.1 Blue Climathons

The Coalition will support the organisation of Blue Climathons organised by Coalition members. Climathons are local innovation hackathons, which typically last 12-48 hours and raise awareness and inspire action on environmental issues that affect communities. Blue Climathons, in particular, bring together citizens and stakeholders to collaboratively generate solutions for local water-related challenges.

Up to 20 Blue Climathons organised by Coalition members will be supported, guiding them through a structured preparation process, including:

- Webinars on conceptualisation, event organisation, fundraising and promotion
- Access to the Climathon resources and branding
- Continuous support from Blue Climathon experts
- Access to a dedicated online community for Climathon organisers to network and exchange knowledge, resources and expertise

Blue Climathons are to be hosted either in March or October, during the so-called Global Climathon Days, connecting the Blue Climathons to the global movement of Climathons. Applications for Coalition members to become Blue Climathon organisers will open six months in advance.

Selected coalition members are expected to find partners, coordinate local logistics, recruit and mobilise participants, attend the preparatory sessions, and raise funds for the events. The Coalition does not provide financing for event organisation costs.

4.2.3.2 Local Stakeholder Engagement Workbook

The Local Stakeholder Engagement Workbook is a practical tool to understand the local ecosystem of actors, map existing dialogues, identify potential allies and recognise silent or marginalised groups whose perspectives are vital. It has a specific focus on the context and needs of waterfront cities, regions and islands and ports.

It guides the authorities through the art of designing participatory processes, with methods and tools on: how to formulate a challenge; how to organise conversations; how to manage expectations and how to translate discussions into concrete steps as part of a transition plan. It encourages territories to adapt, test, adjust, and personalise the methods offered with case study examples.

The first edition of Workbook will be ready by April 2026. while an updated version will be published in May 2028.

4.2.4 Guidance on funding & financing

4.2.4.1 Financing guide & webinars

The financing guide & webinars offer Coalition members support to transform their Mission Ocean & Waters (MOW) Transition Plans into implementable, investable strategies.

The service combines a funding & financing guide complemented by a series of three thematic webinars, designed to support building the financial and investment-readiness capacities of public authorities. The guide will provide a mapping of blue funding and financing sources, while the webinars will translate these concepts into practice by introducing key funding and financing mechanisms, demonstrating financial tools, and offering opportunities for direct exchange with experts.

The financing guide will be delivered in November 2026, while the webinars will be delivered from May 2027 onwards. Participation is open to Coalition members.

4.2.4.2 Pitch & Connect session

An online 'Pitch & Connect' session is designed to bring solution providers into direct contact with cities, regions, island and port authorities and investors.

It ensures that territories preparing their MOW Transition Plans can identify concrete, implementable solutions and investment opportunities—not theoretical concepts. By creating a curated pipeline of relevant solutions, this service strengthens the territories' ability to engage with innovators and investors and move toward financing the actions outlined in their Transition Plans. The session will be interactive.

There will be an open call to identify solution providers, which is anticipated for Q2 2027. The pitch and connection session will be hosted in Q3 2027.

4.2.5 Mission Ocean & Waters Label

The Mission Ocean & Waters Label (MOW Label) provides a credible, structured, and Mission-driven recognition for waterfront cities, regions and islands.

The MOW Label recognises the commitment and achievements of cities, regions, and islands in advancing the objectives of the Mission Ocean and Waters. It provides EU-level recognition and credibility, grounded in a clear commitment, structured stakeholder engagement, and a robust Transition Plan. The Label supports entities in taking the next steps of their journey by offering a framework for progression, fostering peer learning, and enabling comparability across European waterfront territories. It also enhances visibility within the Mission ecosystem and encourages reflection on future investment priorities.

The MOW Label requires applicants to deliver a set of core outputs, including a stakeholder commitment and a Transition Plan. The Transition Plan describes how a city, region, or island intends to contribute to the objectives of the Mission through a coherent set of actions and strategic pathways. Its development involves internal coordination across departments, stakeholder engagement activities, baseline assessments, and the definition of priorities.

To support this process, applicants benefit from a range of support services, including technical assistance and tailored guidance. The application process takes place over 10 months. Applicants are also encouraged to take part in other Coalition services, such as capacity-building activities and twinning.

The Label will be conducted in two waves of participants. The first wave contributes to the development of the Label and consists of predetermined entities, including the six Coalition Pilots and four Lighthouse CSA- nominated entities. A second wave will run from Q2 2027 to Q2 2028, during which ten applicants will be selected through an open application process in Q4 2026.

5. Where to find further information

For further information, please refer to the dedicated FAQs section and the Coalition [website](#). You can also subscribe to our [mailing list](#) or send us an email to hello@co-waters.eu.



co-waters



www.co-waters.eu



@CO-WATERS



@cowaters_eu

PENDING APPROVAL BY THE GRANT AUTHORITY