

Scoping Study to develop a Mediterranean pilot on measuring the sustainability of the Mediterranean Blue Economy

1 Context and objectives

As a Regional Activity Center of the United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan, Plan Bleu seeks to develop a comprehensive framework for assessing the sustainability of the Mediterranean Blue Economy.

Supporting the transition towards sustainable economic activities and advancing the understanding of the interconnections between economic activities, social well-being, and ecological health in the Mediterranean region are among Plan Bleu's mandates. Plan Bleu has developed the Mediterranean [Observatory](#) on Environment and Sustainable Development to support Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention and report on the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD), and as such plays a crucial role in monitoring the sustainability of the blue economy.

However, available information related to blue economy sectors in the Mediterranean primarily describes economic activities using indicators such as value added (% of GDP), employment figures, quantification of other physical elements (number of berths in ports, passenger counts, tourist numbers, catch volumes, etc.), and occasionally qualitative descriptions of interactions with the environment and society. This is insufficient to determine whether an activity is "sustainable" or not. The existing approaches, while valuable, often provide a fragmented view of sustainability. **As the Mediterranean Blue Economy continues to evolve quickly, a comprehensive framework that goes beyond the current indicators is needed to understand its sustainability.**

Plan Bleu aims to support the development of an integrated assessment framework which accounts for the interactions between economic activities, ecosystems, and communities and includes sector-specific indicators. The framework is planned to align with, and draw from, the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 (MSSD 2016-2025), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the Regional Action Plan for Sustainable Consumption and Production.

A crucial step in the comprehensive framework development process is the initiation of a pilot study (described below).

2 Task description

This assignment aims at conducting a feasibility study to frame the development of a holistic assessment of the sustainability of the Mediterranean Blue Economy. This will include : **proposing a set of selected indicators that inform the environmental, social and economic sustainability of the Mediterranean Blue Economy, considering interdependencies between indicators, and providing a comprehensive understanding of the region's state and progress in transitioning towards a Sustainable Blue Economy.** The feasibility study will propose the geographical scope for a Mediterranean pilot to be chosen based on significance in terms of economic activities, environmental and social sensitivity, and potential for conducting interventions that foster sustainability. The pilot shall showcase a diverse array of Blue Economy activities and issues.

The assignment will consist of 4 tasks.

Task 1: Literature review and analysis of currently used indicators

Based on literature review, provide indications about the extent to which currently available Blue Economy literature takes into account and/or measures the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the relevant Blue Economy activities, at the global level and in particular in the Mediterranean region. The output of this task will be a brief document that will also include a referenced list of commonly used indicators and an analysis of the suitability of these indicators/gap analysis to measure the sustainability of the Blue Economy.

Task 2: Proposal of a framework/concept to measure the sustainability of the Blue Economy in the Mediterranean through a pilot study

Taking into account the conclusions from task 1, propose an original framework/concept that aims at providing comprehensive information about the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the Blue Economy. This framework will also include a set of proposed potential alternative sectoral and cross-cutting indicators to measure the sustainability of the Blue Economy and it will explore methodologies and feasibility of quantification.

This task will further investigate the geographical and thematic scope to apply the above mentioned framework in the Mediterranean, justifying their selection. It will also **provide a provisional list of the specific stakeholders** that will ideally be involved

(local communities or associations of local communities, government bodies, industry representatives, NGOs, academic institutions, regional and international organizations, etc). The input of regional stakeholders shall enrich data collection, ensure contextual relevance, and foster a sense of ownership over the sustainability assessment process.

In terms of thematic scope, the framework may focus on sectors which significantly contribute to the Mediterranean Blue Economy's vitality which may include, but not be limited to:

- Maritime Transport: exploring indicators that reflect the environmental efficiency of maritime transport.
- Fisheries and Aquaculture: to assess the adoption of sustainable fishing practices, investigating sustainability of employment in fishing, and the ecological impact of aquaculture activities.
- Offshore Wind Energy: investigating indicators that gauge the ecological compatibility of offshore wind energy projects, considering factors such as marine life protection and renewable energy contribution.
- Tourism: presenting indicators that evaluate the carrying capacity of tourist destinations, the preservation of coastal ecosystems and the socio-economic benefits of sustainable tourism.
- Ports and Infrastructure: indicators to assess the eco-design and smart-design of port facilities, waste management practices, and the integration of blue infrastructure with urban planning.

In addition, a series of cross cutting, non-sector specific themes can be considered, including,

- Circular Economy Metrics: to evaluate the extent to which Blue Economy activities promote resource efficiency, waste reduction, and recycling in the Mediterranean.
- Sustainable Sourcing and Supply Chains: indicators that highlight sustainable sourcing practices within the Blue Economy sectors, such as responsible fishing, sustainable aquaculture, and eco-friendly maritime transport.
- Social Impact Assessment Indicators: to evaluate the effects of Blue Economy activities on local communities and social well-being (including through a gender and equality lens).
- Inclusive Governance for Blue Economy: looking at indicators to assess the inclusivity and effectiveness of governance structures in the Blue Economy.
- Blue Carbon Assessment: to obtain insights into the contribution of coastal ecosystems to carbon sequestration and their role in climate change mitigation.
- Blue Financial Flows: Tracking and analyzing financial flows into the Blue economy to identify investments in the Med (and whether they are “trending”) in sustainable practices and environmentally friendly technologies.

The results of tasks 1 and 2 will be compiled into a draft scoping study at the end of task 2.

Task 3: Presentation of the draft scoping study during a regional workshop

A first draft of the scoping study, including results of tasks 1 and 2, will be presented by the Consultant during a Plan Bleu Regional Workshop tentatively entitled « Towards a Comprehensive Framework for Assessing the Sustainability of the Mediterranean Blue Economy » (Marseille, tentatively mid-November 2023, travel/accommodation expenses covered by Plan Bleu). The Regional Workshop will assemble a diverse and influential group of participants to foster a dynamic exchange of ideas and experiences. One of its key goals will be to shortlist, and discuss the feasibility of obtaining and using indicators and other types of information to monitor the sustainability of blue economy activities in the Mediterranean; considering interrelationships and trade-offs. It shall allow discussing the study's preliminary findings, and provide comments and suggestions to be included in the final draft by the Consultant.

Task 4 : Final draft of the scoping study

In addition to the results of tasks 1 to 3, the final scoping study shall include an executive summary, and a section of recommendations, providing stakeholders with a preliminary roadmap for applying the proposed framework for measuring the sustainability of the Blue Economy in the Mediterranean through a potential future project.

3 Schedule of services and expected deliverables

The assignment is planned to take place between Monday, October 9th, 2023, and Sunday, December 15th, 2023. All documents will be produced in English.

Task 1	Literature review and analysis of currently used indicators	October 23rd, 2023
Task 2	Proposal of a framework/concept to measure the sustainability of the Blue Economy in the Mediterranean through a pilot study	November 13th, 2023

Task 3	Presentation of the first draft of the scoping study during a regional workshop	November 22nd, 2023 (date to be confirmed)
Task 4	Final draft of the scoping study	December 15th 2023

4 Consultant Selection Criteria

This mission is open to consulting firms, consultant associations/consortia, research institutions and other relevant organizations, as well as individual consultants.

Qualified candidates for this mission should also meet the following criteria:

Education:

- **Minimum of a master's degree** in a field relevant to this mission (PhD is a plus)
- Education in the field of economics, statistics, development studies and/or environmental policies is desirable (specialization in Blue Economy is a plus)

Experience and Skills:

- Minimum of **5 years of relevant experience** in environmental economics and ecology
- Familiarity **with data collection methods and development of socio-economic and sustainability indicators**
- **Experience in the follow-up of Sustainable Development Goals**
- **Knowledge of sustainability issues linked to the marine and coastal environment**
- Experience working in the **Mediterranean region** is an asset
- Excellent **writing, analysis, and synthesis skills**
- Knowledge of **stakeholders** and issues related to sustainable development and the Blue Economy
- **English proficiency**

5 Consultant Selection

The selection of the expert will be based on the evaluation of their technical proposal (their skills in relation to the required qualifications described above and the proposed methodology) and an assessment of the most economically advantageous offer. **The maximum budget for this consultancy amounts to 10,000 Euros (VAT included).** The financial proposal should detail all costs, incidental expenses, and taxes (including any applicable VAT).

Candidates are required to provide references to their previous work on similar topics and relevant documents via email to the address indicated below if these are not provided through an active web link.

Furthermore, candidates must demonstrate their legal capacity to sign contracts and issue invoices according to the legislation of their country. For this purpose, they must also include the following documents in their proposal:

For consulting firms:

- Recent KBIS extract (less than 3 months old) for France
- Document confirming company registration in their country, including the indicated tax number (for foreign countries)
- Full bank account details (BIC, IBAN or BBAN) provided by the bank.

For individual consultants:

- Certificate of registration in the Directory of Companies and Establishments.
- Document certifying the right to practice this profession (such as a registration certificate) according to the legislation of their country, including the tax number (for foreign countries).
- Full bank account details (BIC, IBAN or BBAN) provided by the bank.

The final selection of the candidate may require an interview. In such a case, candidates will have the option to participate in an in-person interview in Marseille (France) or through a video conference.

6 Contractual, Financial, and Practical Conditions

Acceptance of the selected offer implies acceptance of the conditions and schedules detailed in these terms of reference, including the following payment schedule:

- An interim payment of 30% of the total amount, upon receipt by Plan Bleu of the results of task 1.
- An interim payment of 40%, based on the acceptance by Plan Bleu of the results of tasks 2 and 3
- The balance of 30%, upon approval of the final report (Task 4) by Plan Bleu accompanied by the final statement of days worked and the final financial statement of expenses incurred for the completion of this contract.

A duly issued invoice will be required for each of the scheduled payments.

The payment term for invoices will be as follows: bank transfer 15 days after the date of receiving the invoice (bank account details must be specified, and complete bank account details must be provided).

The applicable tax legislation on the date of offer acceptance will be applied.

To Respond to this Call for Proposals

Plan Bleu invites interested consulting firms, consultant associations/consortiums, and individual consultants for this mission to express their interest by submitting a response to this call for proposals, including a letter of expression of interest, CVs of experts, as well as a detailed financial and technical offer in response to these terms of reference.

The technical offer should specify if any in-situ mission days are required. If so, provide a detailed mission schedule.

Application files must be submitted no later than October 5th, 2023, on www.planbleu.org and by email to ctsakas@planbleu.org and planbleu@planbleu.org. For further information, please contact:

Constantin Tsakas, Program Officer, Socioeconomic Analysis and Blue Economy, ctsakas@planbleu.org.