

# 2021 ACTIVITY REPORT

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BLUE  
SEEDS

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# TABLE OF CONTENT

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EDITO .....	2
ABOUT US .....	3
2021, MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS .....	4
OUR KEY PROJECTS .....	7
Co-managed No-take Zone / Marine Protected Area .....	8
Blue Incubator .....	9
Mediterranean Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries pre-financing facility in EU and non-EU countries .....	10
"Together for the Med" partnership .....	11
OUR TRAININGS .....	12
Training on financial planning for MPAs .....	13
Training on financial planning for West-African MPAs .....	15
Training on management effectiveness of marine conservation projects .....	16
OUR SOLUTIONS .....	18
Support programmes .....	19
Blue Local Incubator .....	21
Pre-financing facility for small-scale fisheries .....	22
Blue Carbon .....	23
OUR TOOLS .....	25
Our guide .....	26
Our BlueDiagnosis .....	27
BlueMooring .....	28
OUR NETWORKS .....	30
Together for the Med .....	31
Mediterranean Posidonia Network .....	32
Ocean & Climate Platform .....	33
RespectOcean .....	33
Our partners .....	34



# EDITO

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## We are BlueSeeds!

The political objectives set for marine conservation over the past three decades are mostly about percentages: 10% in 2020, 30% in 2030, and 50% in 2040 of protected areas coverage globally.

I have always been skeptical about these percentages, though the indisputable race it created for announcements of the creation of marine protected areas (MPAs). What is really missing to conservation is **effectiveness**, the ability to exercise sound management of resources, protection of threatened habitats, and control over abusive uses. But to increase effectiveness, funding is necessary, with as much importance as **the concrete means to operate effective conservation**.

Assisting MPA managers is in our DNA: through training and meetings, we support conservation practitioners in structuring their financial and management strategies. Together with field actors, we develop concrete financing solutions to increase their revenues and improve the efficiency of protected areas. They are numerous: **blue carbon financing mechanisms, entrance and concession fees, revolving funds, fundraising strategies...**

The year 2021 has been decisive for us. We have been fortunate to see BlueSeeds grow as a multidisciplinary and resourceful team. Over the past year, we have advised MPA managers from many countries, co-constructed many financing strategies, built a number of management tools, and provided hours and hours of training.

The positive feedback from the field gives us **optimism** because by developing new conservation models, **we can provide the means to match up the goals**. With the results we have achieved, BlueSeeds has found its place in the conservation world, and we are ready to take on this challenge and continue our missions.

Thomas Binet  
BlueSeeds Founder



# ABOUT US

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BlueSeeds is addressing the challenge of insufficient funding for marine conservation.

Only for the Mediterranean region, a financing gap of 700 million euros identified by Binet et al. (2015) prevents Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) from carrying out their conservation mission\*.

This alarming figure was part of BlueSeeds' raison d'être when it was founded in 2018.

To help conservation project coordinators meet their financing needs and build a sustainable financial strategy, BlueSeeds develops a range of customized solutions.

As technical assistants, we help these actors implement those solutions in the field.

BlueSeeds is composed of a multidisciplinary team with expertise in economics, marine biology, finance, project management, law, communication, international relations, and capacity building.

These skills, coupled with expertise developed by the consulting agency Vertigo Lab (BlueSeeds' parent company) over many years, allow BlueSeeds to offer a complete set of solutions to meet the needs of conservationists and MPA managers.

\*Binet T, Diazabakana A, Hernandez S (2015a) Sustainable financing of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean: a financial analysis. Vertigo Lab, MedPAN, RAC/SPA, WWF Mediterranean.



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# 2021 MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

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## - THE TEAM HAS GROWN FROM 8 TO 12

We are a multidisciplinary team with skills in economics, marine biology, finance, project management, law, international relations, communication, and entrepreneurship. More than just consultants, we work as technical assistants. We adapt our tools to the needs of each stakeholder and replicate successful initiatives.

## - WE HAVE PROVIDED OVER 150 HOURS OF TRAINING AIMED AT CONSERVATION EFFECTIVENESS

Support and capacity-building actions we provide are helping to develop an entrepreneurial approach to conservation projects, improve the internal management of structures involved and identify sustainable financing solutions.



## - WE CO-CONSTRUCTED 27 BUSINESS PLANS FOR 27 MPAS

We have developed a training module to help MPA managers elaborate their business plans and develop a solid financial strategy. These trainings meet a real need expressed by site managers and has enabled 27 MPAs to structure their business plan. Building their capacities in financial planning is essential to ensure the sustainability of their marine conservation projects.

## - WE HAVE MET MORE THAN 60 PASSIONATE MPAS MANAGERS

We work hand in hand with the actors in the field and provide them with technical assistance. Practical training, development of innovative technologies, assistance in accessing subsidies, support for local entrepreneurship. We offer a range of tailor-made solutions, creating human synergies around natural marine areas, with the sole objective of strengthening the impact of conservation initiatives.





### **- WE HAVE LAUNCHED BLUEMOORING**

The first mooring management web application built by and for mooring zone managers, to effectively manage their moorings zones, to collect mooring fees and communicate more easily with visitors.

### **- WE FACILITATED A NETWORK OF 50 PARTNERS COMMITTED TO REDUCING FISHING PRESSURE**

Together for the Med is a network—of NGOs, international organisations, research centres, private companies—that we are proud to coordinate in collaboration with IUCN. We are working together to bring fisheries sustainability, reduce their impact on seagrass and habitats and reduce accidental bycatch.

### **- WE PROVIDED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO 40 MEDITERRANEAN SMALL-SCALE FISHERS TO ACCESS EUROPEAN FUNDS**

With our partner WWF Mediterranean, we built a granting mechanism to provide upfront capital to small-scale fishers and technical assistance to access European funds in order to foster their transition towards sustainability.

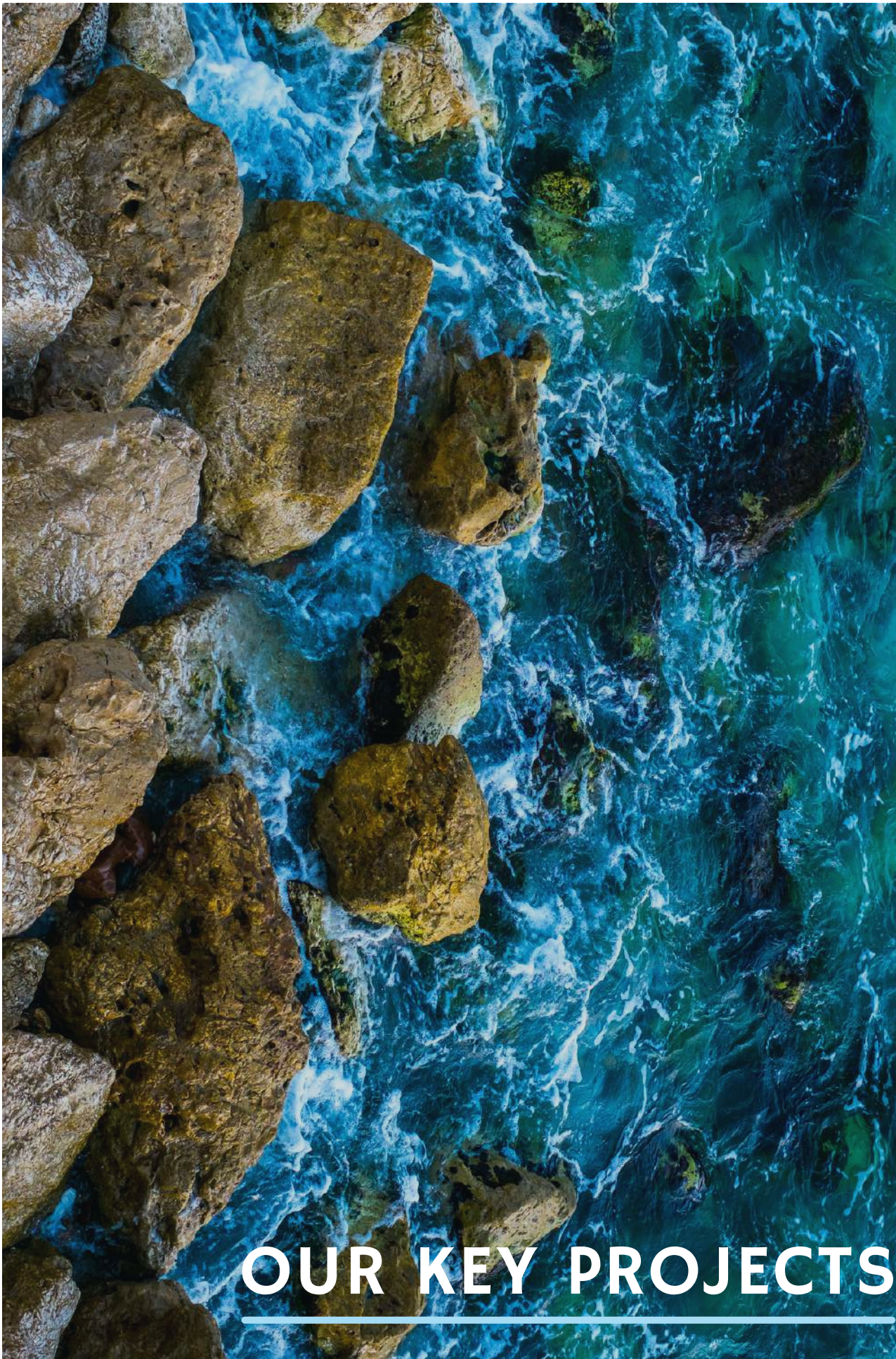
## - WE PRESENTED AND OFFERED FINANCING SOLUTIONS IN 15 COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD!

Through two years of action research, field missions, feedback from donors and conservationists, BlueSeeds was able to deploy its activities in the Mediterranean region, and is now exporting its activities around the world.



Locations of our activities until 2021





# OUR KEY PROJECTS

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Our main projects all benefit from the financial support of the MAVA foundation.

## - CO-MANAGED NO-TAKE ZONE / MARINE PROTECTED AREA

Managing MPAs effectively is still a major challenge for most Mediterranean countries and only 1.27% of the basin is covered by MPAs that effectively implement their management plan. Thanks to the support of the MAVA Foundation, BlueSeeds joined forces in 2020 with seven Mediterranean partners (AGIR, HCMR, LIFE, MedPAN, NGB, SPA/RAC, WWF) to develop a new regional partnership to boost the work on MPAs and create long-lasting mechanisms towards a resilient Mediterranean Sea.

### A large-scale project across the Mediterranean

The partners of the project deploy a strong investment in the field by directly working with coastal communities, MPAs and small-scale fishers (SSF) in 30 coastal and marine areas of 10 countries. The project, running from July 2020 to October 2022 is designed to ensure impact far into the future. The project is divided into three main strategies: prove the effectiveness of MPAs and no-take zones (1), scale-up at Mediterranean level (2) and ensure adequate regulatory framework and effective implementation (3).

### Our mission: increase financial sustainability in the Mediterranean

In this project, BlueSeeds is the main partner in charge of financial sustainability scalability. The financial sustainability of the local initiatives is guaranteed by building financial skills at local level through trainings and workshops, testing and implementing financing mechanisms. Project results will be scaled-up at regional level by supporting capacity building, disseminating and exchanging lessons learned, promoting networking in order to amplify the impact and involve other MPAs and fishers of the Mediterranean countries and beyond.





## - BLUE INCUBATOR

### Leveraging marine conservation through entrepreneurship

Considering marine conservation as a complex system with environmental, economic, and social components, BlueSeeds works on leveraging marine conservation through entrepreneurship. Social acceptability, long-term planning, and efficiency of conservation activities sometimes represent obstacles for marine protected areas.

### Based on the principles of the blue economy

Thanks to the support of the MAVA Foundation, BlueSeeds works as project coordinator, at two levels: at the local scale, with the development and the replication of Blue Local Incubators, and at the regional scale, with the implementation of solutions such as BlueMooring.org.

Locally, Blue Local Incubators are part of a community-based entrepreneurship support process that aims at reinforcing the economic attractiveness of territory, by fostering a circular economy, e.g. through eco-tourism, organic farming, waste collection, or soft mobility.



### Lastovo, Croatia, a success story

First implemented on the island of Lastovo in Croatia, in partnership with the team of WWF Adria, a Blue Local Incubator was essential in the rise of 5 green entrepreneurs. Building on this first successful experience in Lastovo, BlueSeeds and WWF Adria are now partnering with an ethical Croatian bank to offer a replicable and sustainable Blue Local Incubator model that will include a dedicated revolving fund.





Regionally, the goal of BlueSeeds' mooring management tool BlueMooring.org is to reinforce the capabilities of MPAs to manage their mooring zones, raise awareness of boaters and facilitate the collection of mooring fees.

Following the test phase, BlueSeeds will scale up this initiative to promote eco-mooring for boaters and thus preserve the endangered bottom habitat: Posidonia meadows while increasing revenue for conservation activities.

## **- MEDITERRANEAN SUSTAINABLE SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES (SSF) PRE-FINANCING FACILITY IN EU AND NON-EU COUNTRIES**

Mediterranean small-scale fisheries are showing difficulties in accessing the European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) aimed at supporting the development of sustainable fishing practices. Funds are available but remain unspent. The difficulties to access them are due to fishers' insufficient capital to advance expenditures before they can get reimbursed, the access to bank credits, and a strong need for technical assistance.



### **Reducing fishing pressures**

The project Mediterranean Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries (SSF) pre-financing facility in EU and non-EU countries was funded by the MAVA Foundation in 2020 within the framework of its M4/M5 Outcome Action Plans (OAP) aiming to reduce fishing impacts and pressures on marine habitats and species in the Mediterranean Basin.

The objective of this project is to develop and assess the feasibility of a pre-financing facility that would enhance the mainstreaming of the EMFF to support the improvement of the sustainability of Mediterranean small-scale fisheries.

### **Promising results towards a financing mechanism**

In 2021, WWF and BlueSeeds launched a call for grants to test the interest of small-scale fishers in receiving grants (from 5 000€ to 20 000€) and technical assistance to support their access to EMFF funds.

We received 111 applications from European fishers, requesting more than three times the available budget. This demonstrated a strong interest.

We awarded 42 applications (for a total amount of 215K€) aimed at implementing actions in favor of sustainable fishing (e.g. increasing selectivity). These fishers have been supported by technical assistants and applied to national EMFF calls. They are waiting for approval by national EMFF authorities.

Following this successful test of this granting mechanism, a proposal of a pre-financing facility (designed to be self-financing in the long run through a lending/reimbursement revolving mechanism) is currently being drafted.





# TOGETHER FOR THE MED

## Strength lies in numbers

Thanks to its Programmatic Approach, the MAVA Foundation has strengthened a partnership around Action plans thus 18 projects are coordinated to achieve the same overall goal: **reduce fishing pressure on marine biodiversity**. Since the MAVA Foundation is closing its support program at the end of 2022, it is crucial to reinforce this network between the 46 partners and to find solutions to ensure the financial sustainability of the ongoing conservation projects.

The Partnership project aims to improve the coordination and internal communication, develop a collective vision and a common policy strategy built on the capitalized results of the Partnership, secure funding for post-2022 projects, as well as develop innovative sustainable financial solutions.

## BlueSeeds, a network facilitator

BlueSeeds is the project leader and is in charge of strategy 1 Coordination & internal communication and strategy 3 Impact & Financial sustainability. IUCN Med is in charge of strategy 2 Policy support & knowledge transfer.

To reinforce the partnership, BlueSeeds has created the Together for the Med platform, social media visibility, regular newsletters to inform about the project's news, and organizes meetings on project monitoring. We are working on a documentary with a production company (ImagéO).

We are also working on impact measurement analysis at the scale of the network to valorize and capitalize on past results and work on a fundraising strategy to develop and finance future collaborative projects.



Caleta, Spain, Feb. 2022



# OUR TRAININGS

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The level of success and continuity of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) over time depends directly on the size and capacity of their management teams, as well as on the funding available to support management teams and actions. Thus, sufficient financial resources are a precondition to ensuring that MPAs are well-managed and play their role in the preservation of biodiversity.

## - TRAINING ON FINANCIAL PLANNING FOR MEDITERRANEAN MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

In the Mediterranean, many MPAs face operational difficulties, especially in non-EU countries. Only 5% of MPAs in the have enough budget to cover all their management needs, whereas more than half either have no dedicated budget at all or a budget inadequate for even basic management needs, which presents a serious constraint on the capacity to manage. The financial analysis on sustainable financing of MPAs in the Mediterranean conducted by Vertigo Lab for MedPAN in 2015 showed that MPA revenues vary a lot over time, and mainly depend on short-term sources of financing to fully implement management plans. Financial resources may increase with international cooperation and go down in periods of financial scarcity. International cooperation financing is allocated on a project basis, with an average timeframe of 4 years. This generates “breaking points” and can place the MPA in a difficult situation.

MPA revenues should be as stable as possible over the long term to avoid these situations. Whenever MPA revenues are volatile, as in most cases, a financial strategy needs to be put in place. Drawing a parallel with the business sector helps illustrate the need for financial planning in MPAs by showing how a business approach makes it possible to achieve strategic goals and objectives for MPAs. Business strategy does not just involve increasing revenues. It also involves building the capacity to manage resources well, meet the needs of diverse and changing stakeholders and do this both now and into the foreseeable future.



In 2021, BlueSeeds, in partnership with MedPAN (the network of Mediterranean MPAs) and Brijuni National Park, led a training program on financial planning for Mediterranean MPAs followed by 20 participants from 10 MPAs from Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Turkey, Lebanon, and Egypt. This training was financially supported by the Interreg MPA NETWORKS project, the MAVA foundation, the COGITO project, and the French Office of Biodiversity.



The overall learning objective of the training was to enable MPA managers to build a financial strategy that is demand-driven and based on the MPA conservation goals and objectives.

Because of the COVID situation, the program initially meant to take place face-to-face, had to be converted to an all-digital format. This was a challenge that BlueSeeds undertook by using a successful “flipped classroom” approach.

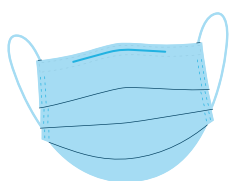
BlueSeeds recorded 5 training videos explaining how to :

- do business planning,
- reduce costs,
- optimize revenues,
- develop self-financing revenues.

After watching these videos, participants worked alone on their business plan, using data from their MPA. They built their plan using a tool – the MedPLAN – that was initially developed by Vertigo Lab for MedPAN, and updated by BlueSeeds. BlueSeeds trainers then discussed their results with participants remotely over several meetings.



Training on financial planning for Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas - Fev. 2021



The feedback from participants was positive, managers and financial officers of MPAs attending the training reported that the training and the tool had given them perspective into their financial strategy and even into their management activities. Indeed, most had never done a business plan before and many had not considered the costs of their activities and their revenues beyond a 2-year time frame, which is clearly a handicap when trying to manage a MPA sustainably.



## - TRAINING ON FINANCIAL PLANNING FOR WEST-AFRICAN MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Naturally, Mediterranean MPAs are not the only MPAs facing financial difficulties, with inadequate financial planning. MPAs from West Africa are poorly funded, with governments providing the minimum in terms of recurrent costs, including salaries. Any major conservation project or investment often stems from international funding. In these conditions, it is important to train local managers to become more autonomous in planning their budget and more generally to estimate the funding deficit that needs to be closed to help these MPAs reach their conservation objectives.



Moritania - Sept. 2021

Following up on its long experience delivering trainings on financial planning to MPAs, BlueSeeds partnered up with Baastel Consulting Group to deliver this kind of training to approximately 70 managers or financial officers belonging to 37 MPAs from the RAMPAO network of West-African MPAs located in Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Guinea. The training was funded by the ongoing project "Small initiatives and financial mechanisms for the conservation of marine and coastal biodiversity in West Africa" (PIMFAO), co-financed by the French Fund for the Global Environment (FFEM) and the MAVA Foundation.

Contrary to its earlier experience in early 2021 in the Mediterranean (see previous section), the situation of the COVID pandemic later in the year allowed face-to-face trainings with west-African MPA management teams. This change in conditions was particularly welcome in view of the very difficult internet connection between Europe and those regions, which would have hampered any form of remote training.



Training on financial planning for West-African Marine Protected Areas - Guinea Sept. 2021



Travelling to Mauritania, Gambia and Guinea, BlueSeeds delivered 2-day trainings, where they first shared the theoretical framework behind financial planning with participants and then helped managements teams work on their individual business plans. As for the trainings delivered in the Mediterranean, feedback from participants was positive, managers and financial officers of MPAs attending reporting that the training and the tool had given them perspective into their financial strategy and even into their management activities. Following the training, BlueSeeds also wrote several technical reports for RAMPAO, summarising and analysing MPA budgets in West Africa at MPA level, national level and regional level.

## - TRAINING ON MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS OF MARINE CONSERVATION PROJECTS

The idea of a training program on the effectiveness and durability of marine conservation projects originated from the observation by BlueSeeds that if most actors in the field of marine conservation usually have a solid background in environmental sciences, they often have limited skills in conservation finance, community entrepreneurship, management or communication. Yet, such skills are essential to ensure the effectiveness and durability of any marine conservation project. BlueSeeds developed some expertise in these areas over time and decided to share its experience with practitioners of marine conservation.



Gokova, Turkey - Nov. 2021

In 2021, BlueSeeds delivered this new 5-day training program to 25 first-year students of the MARRES (Marine Resources Science, Conservation & Innovation) MSc program at the Université of Côte d'Azur (funder of the training) in France. Because of the success of the training BlueSeeds decided to replicate it in the Mediterranean with financial help from the MAVA-funded Co-Managed MPA / No-Take Zone project, which BlueSeeds is a partner of.



Bootcamp Université of Côte d'Azur - Sept 2021



Brijuni, Croatia - Sept. 2021



Monastir, Tunisia - Nov. 2021



Gokova, Turkey - Nov. 2021

Between October and November 2021, BlueSeeds' trainers traveled across the Med to deliver one-week training to 3 groups of 15 people working in the field of marine conservation. Trainings took place in the training centers of the organizations Brijuni National National Park (Brijuni, Croatia), Notre Grand Bleu (Monastir, Tunisia) and Mediterranean Conservation Society (Akyaka, Turkey). Hosting organisations were central in the success of the trainings, providing valuable help finding candidates and organising logistics on site.



The question of the target group was a central issue since it determined how effective the delivered training would be. BlueSeeds decided that each one-week training would be delivered to participants from countries belonging to the same sub-region, to enhance connectivity amongst people who face similar issues. Overall, participants came from 1) Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro and Albania, 2) Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco and 3) Turkey and Lebanon.

BlueSeeds' trainers also considered that MPA managers should not be the only target group, because they are not the only decision-makers in the field of marine conservation, although they often get the attention of capacity-building programs. In the end, trainings targeted members of MPAs, NGOs, academia, public institutions (ministries, coast guards) and international institutions.

Day 1 of the 5-day training was dedicated to discussing the limits to current existing solutions for protecting marine ecosystems. During day 2, participants explored business planning and means to reduce management costs. On day 3, the training focused on increasing revenues through self-financing mechanisms. Day 4 was dedicated to discussing stakeholder involvement and included a field visit. On day 5, participants were introduced to community entrepreneurship. Throughout the week, trainees were asked to present examples from their own conservation activities. Participation was therefore encouraged, also during sessions where trainees, divided in small groups, analysed and evaluated together data from their own conservation projects.



Gokova, Turkey - the BlueSeeds trainers



Brijuni, Croatia - Sept. 2021

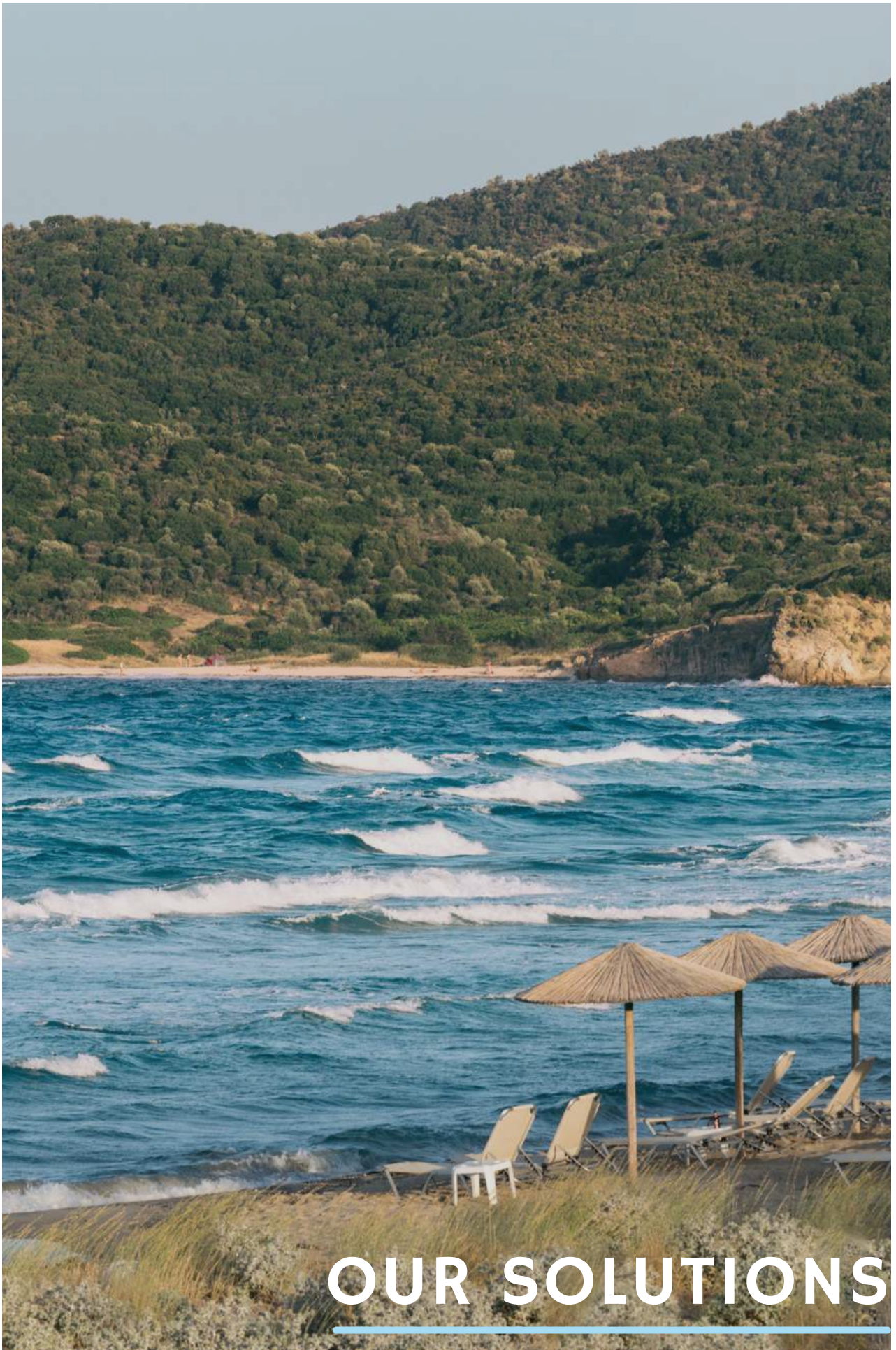


Monastir, Tunisia - Nov. 2021



Overall, the feedback BlueSeeds received from participants was extremely positive. People appreciated the interactive approach, the opportunity to build networks and learn from one another, and the use of digital tools to evaluate their own conservation project or build a financial strategy for it. There was a lot of demand for more group work using practical tools to work on one's own data, and this was confirmed in the output of the surveys BlueSeeds sent to evaluate the trainings. The success of these trainings begs the question of their replication. There is a clear need for this type of content and these trainings could have an even bigger impact if they reached out to a greater number of people, also from other geographical and cultural areas of the Mediterranean.





# OUR SOLUTIONS

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## - SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

The financial sustainability of marine conservation activities in the Mediterranean is a crucial issue, given the current financing gap, but also the expected disappearance of a major source of funding at the end of 2022.

As part of the Co-managed NTZ/MPAs project, BlueSeeds is developing solutions to help managers set up self-financing mechanisms in their MPAs. First, we developed a practical guide for MPA managers, offering them a **step-by-step methodology**. Then, in order to support managers in the effective implementation of these mechanisms (visitor fee, concession), we developed 2 support programmes aimed at assisting managers in the development of these 2 mechanisms.

### Ongoing and individual support

These support programmes consist of several toolkits providing managers with the necessary tools for each step of implementation. The support programmes consist of 8 steps: **scoping phase, stakeholders' involvement, willingness-to-pay survey, fee level estimation, collection process structuration, implementation, monitoring, environmental awareness.**

The very first step is essential: each supported MPA starts with a scoping phase, allowing BlueSeeds to assess the type of financing mechanism best suited to the context and to anticipate the main obstacles that may be encountered during the process.

### Empowering MPAs towards financial diversification

We act as technical assistants, by providing the tools and support necessary to carry out the work (willingness-to-pay survey, legal questionnaires, stakeholder involvement guide, etc.). The support programme is co-constructed and adapted to the specific needs of the field. Several tools have been developed at the request of a supported MPA, and subsequently used for other MPAs. **A strong need for advocacy was expressed**, in order to convince decision-makers of the relevance and feasibility of such mechanisms. The support programmes have evolved in order to respond to these specific issues and to make the self-financing mechanism last on their MPAs.



The process:



Support program - Visitor fees



Support program - Concession fees

1. We launched the call for expression of interest for the implementation of visitor fees in May.
2. We received 12 applications. Today, we are glad to assist 3 MPAs in the implementation of visitor fees: Karaburun-Sazan, Albanie, Sibenik-Knin, Croatia, Katic MPA, Montenegro.
3. In August, we launched the call for expression of interest to start the support program for the implementation of concession. BlueSeeds received 9 applications.
4. We are now happy to help 2 MPAs with the implementation of the concession mechanism: Al Hoceima, Morocco, Gokova SEPA, Turkey.
5. We organized one kick-off meeting, 4 Willingness-to-Pay Surveys, 8 milestone meetings.



## THE BLUE LOCAL INCUBATOR

With the aim to reconnect marine conservation stakeholders with local communities, we have created our community-based entrepreneurship incubator: the Blue Local Incubator.

The Blue Local Incubator is a **community-based entrepreneurship support process**. Based on the Blue Economy principles, it aims to promote the creation of small businesses and to make local people active stakeholders in the protection of marine and coastal biodiversity.

### Philosophy of the tool

The Blue Local Incubator respects 4 principles

- **positive impact:** it must support activities that generate a positive impact on biodiversity and local populations
- **synergies:** it connects actors with other blue economy initiatives around the world
- **exemplarity:** it demonstrates another model of economic development
- **sustainability:** it is long-lasting, resilient, and innovative



Lastovo, Croatia - 2020

### The process

1. A preliminary phase (4 to 6 months). In partnership with a local organization, the team carries out an integrated environmental, socio-economic and cultural diagnosis thanks to its "BlueDiagnosis" tool to then adapt the incubator to the local issues and obstacles.
2. A call for applications from Blue Business Ideas (2 months), with public events and adapted communication. Parallel development of impact indicators specific to the local context. Here we were expecting 5 applications max, but we received, surprisingly 22 applications with very rich and various ideas.
3. A Blue Business Ideas development phase (4 months) during which candidates are assisted by our team to move from an idea to an economically viable Blue Business proposal. At the end of this phase, we set up the jury meeting to select 7 entrepreneurs.
4. An incubation phase (5 months) that aims to train entrepreneurs in sustainable management and enable these Blue Businesses to be economically viable, financially sustainable, and ocean-friendly managed.
5. Finally, a monitoring and impact measurement system is being put in place. The network of partners is maintained through several meetings.



### Positive results

This first experimentation showed very positive results, in terms of the network of local, national and international partners and their diversity (conservation sector (WWF-Adria, MAVA Foundation), sustainable development sector (SMILO), sustainable tourism sector (PEAK), sustainable finance sector (Ethical Bank Croatia).

### The 3 main strengths of the Blue Local Incubator

- social and economic benefits for current and future generations by contributing to food security, poverty eradication, ensuring stable incomes, job creation, health, equity and promoting political stability through the development of cooperation and public-private partnerships.
- protection, maintenance and restoration of marine ecosystems (their diversity, resilience, productivity, primary functions, intrinsic value), the natural capital on which the prosperity of the territory depends. The incubator promotes the development of green technologies, renewable energies and the circular economy to ensure the sustainability of the local socio-economic fabric and the attractiveness of the territory.
- priority to local actors and entrepreneurs. The objective is to make them actors of the sustainable transition of their island and proud of their actions for marine conservation and waste reduction.



### PRE-FINANCING FACILITY FOR SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES

This mechanism is being built within the framework of the Mediterranean Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries (SSF) pre-financing facility in EU and non-EU countries project funded by the MAVA Foundation.

#### Granting mechanism and technical assistance

In 2021, the WWF and BlueSeeds have been developing the concept and assessing the feasibility of a pre-financing facility to foster the transition of Mediterranean SSF to sustainable fisheries through a granting mechanism and technical assistance for fishers to access European funds (EMFF). After having assessed the effectiveness of the granting mechanism, we are developing the concept of a prefinancing facility/revolving fund mechanism.

This financing mechanism is based on the issuance of micro-credits that would allow small-scale fishers to pre-finance their project before even receiving European funds.

The scenarios to draft the concept of this pre-financing facility are being elaborated according to 3 different management schemes and potential administrative costs (which have been estimated taking into account the implementation of the first granting mechanism).



## BLUE CARBON (R&D)

### BlueSeeds' high priority: *Posidonia oceanica*

It is an endemic keystone species of seagrass in the Mediterranean Sea. These seagrass meadows have huge stores of carbon buried in carbon-rich sediments held belowground by its roots. Per unit area, they have the largest store of belowground carbon when compared to terrestrial forests, mangroves, salt marshes peatlands and other seagrass species (IUCN, 2021).

Unfortunately, *Posidonia oceanica* ecosystems are among the most threatened marine habitats. Every year thousands of pleasure boats drop their anchors which drag across the seafloor uprooting the *Posidonia* shoots and clear-cutting the canopy. In minutes, they destroy what the slow-growing *Posidonia* takes generations to create.

Eco-moorings are permanent fixtures in the seafloor that boaters can tie their boat to instead of dropping destructive anchors. Unfortunately, eco-moorings are expensive and many Mediterranean MPAs cannot afford their installation. As part of the MPA No Take Zone project, BlueSeeds is developing a *Posidonia* blue carbon financing mechanism project. The Project's goal is to finance the installation of eco-moorings through the creation and sale of carbon credits.



### Exploration phase in 2021

In 2021, BlueSeeds prepared a draft independent methodology for Determining Additional Carbon Emission Reductions from Avoided Anchoring Damage on *Posidonia oceanica* Seagrass Meadows. Before drafting the BlueSeeds methodology, we explored the option to use existing methodologies.

We found the existing methodologies are not appropriate for seagrass ecosystems and using the existing procedures to certify a project requires time and resources unavailable to most MPA authorities.

To address these concerns, we took best practices from the United Nations Clean Development Mechanism, Label Bas-carbone, and Verra methodologies, and incorporated them into a *Posidonia*-specific simpler BlueSeeds methodology.

In the process of finalizing the methodology, encountered 2 main obstacles: there is limited data to quantify anchoring damage, and we needed to conduct studies on a pilot site because carbon stocks are heavily site-specific.



## 2022 : time to develop our own methodology

This year, BlueSeeds, in collaboration with our academic partner and field support partner, is doing the necessary research to finalize the methodology and pilot the project.

We will conduct two studies to estimate:

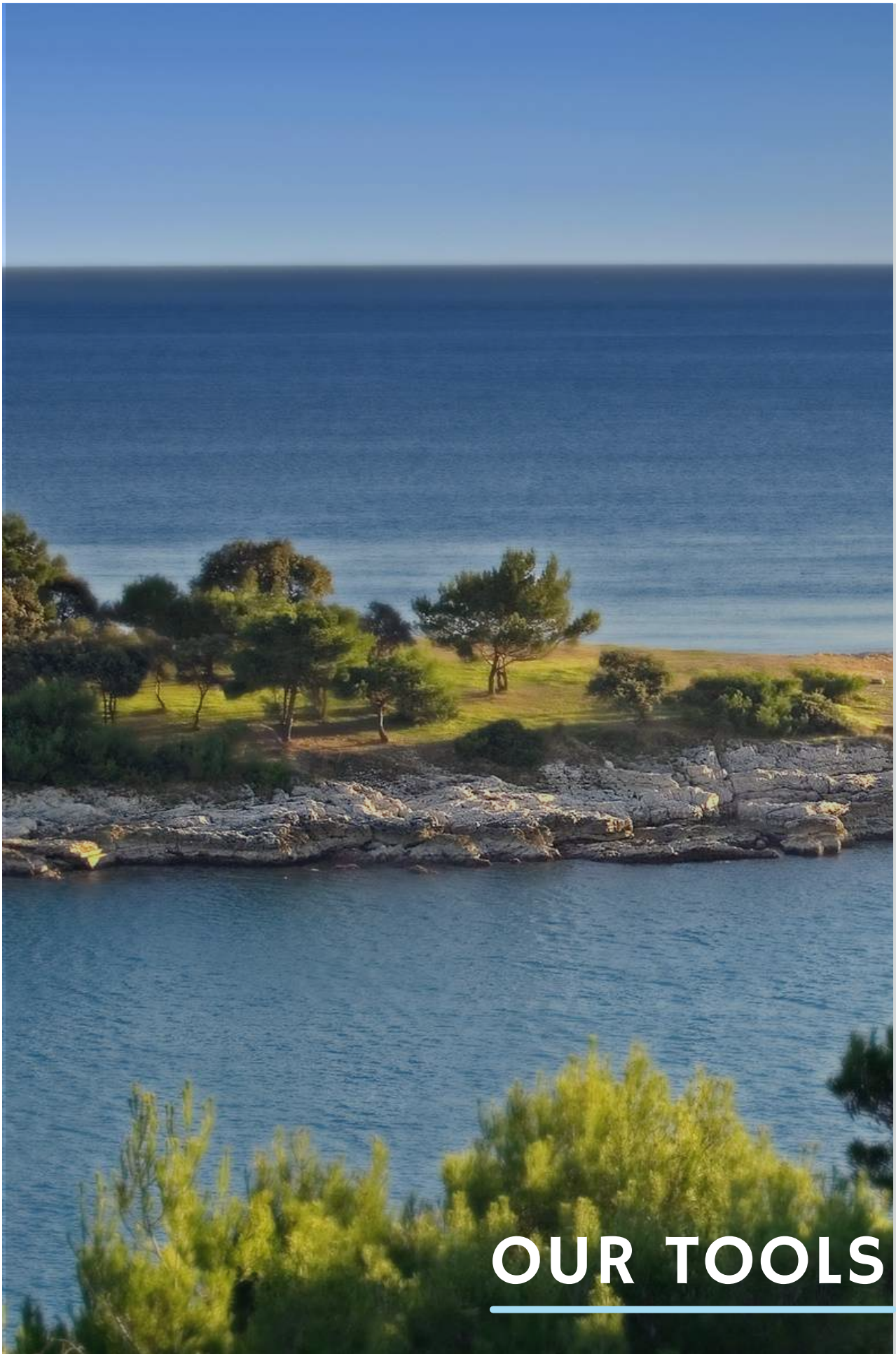
- how much carbon is stored in the Posidonia,
- how much boat anchors damage the Posidonia.
- By combining these two studies, we can determine the amount of carbon credits, which equals the carbon not released by installing eco-moorings and reducing anchoring.

Once these studies are done, we can prepare a Project Design Document (PDD) which describes the **methods, data, and calculations**. Then once the project is validated by a 3rd party auditor, the carbon credits can be issued and sold on the voluntary market to co-finance the installation of the eco-mooring.

We hope to build upon the success of our pilot project and install carbon-financed eco-moorings throughout the Mediterranean Sea.







## - OUR GUIDE

In the framework of the Co-managed NTZ/MPAs project, BlueSeeds has developed a practical guide for MPA managers, offering them a step-by-step methodology for developing their financing strategy and setting up self-financing mechanisms.

### Giving ownership of the sustainable financing issues

We develop a guide in 4 chapters:

- Developing a financing strategy for Mediterranean MPAs,
- Implementing a visitor fee,
- Implementing concession fees,
- Implementing revolving funds for sustainable fisheries.

For each chapter, BlueSeeds has developed a practical approach to enable managers to carry out these different activities independently. Practical tips, prerequisites, and limitations, as well as a bibliography to go further, are all information that the guide provides to MPA practitioners.



### Spreading the word

In collaboration with MedPAN, we organized a webinar for the release of the guide on the 17th of February. We were happy to see that 220 people were present, which shows the real need for information sharing on this subject that exists within the community of MPA managers in the Mediterranean.

Thanks to OCTO - Open Communication for the Ocean, we have expanded the scope of dissemination to the international during a webinar where more than 200 people registered. Over 100,000 ocean professionals in 120 countries use OCTO programs each year. We also presented the guide during several international events such as the IUCN World Conservation Congress in September 2021 or the Mediterranean MPA Forum in December 2021.

With this guide, more than 80 MPA practitioners have been directly trained with the guide by the BlueSeeds team (during our training or workshop in the field).

The guide has been downloaded more than 540 times online and it is still very frequently downloaded.



## - EVALUATING THE MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS OF MPAS, THE BLUEDIAGNOSIS

If the importance of MPAs as tools for marine conservation is recognized unanimously by scientists, the effectiveness of MPAs can be limited by various factors. For BlueSeeds, 2021 was the year of the finalization of a tool for evaluating the effectiveness of MPA management called BlueDiagnosis and by its large-scale testing on MPA managers located in different countries across the Mediterranean.



### A self-assessment tool

To build the BlueDiagnosis, we first asked ourselves what was the definition of sustainability and management effectiveness. For an MPA, this means the existence of financial sustainability, i.e. the guarantee of sufficient, stable, long-term financial resources, making it possible to ensure the management of a protected area according to its conservation objectives. However, the factors of sustainability and effectiveness are not only financial. The diagnostic tool we designed makes it possible to take a picture of 5 major categories of relevant indicators: 1) environmental indicators, 2) financial indicators, 3) partnership indicators, 4) indicators related to the internal organization of the team and 5) innovation indicators. Built as a survey of 48 indicators relating to these 5 main pillars, BlueDiagnosis is a self-assessment tool for MPA managers.

### Successful test phase

In 2021, we shared BlueDiagnosis with nearly 25 MPA managers distributed across the Mediterranean. Their feedbacks were particularly positive. Managers spent a maximum of 1 hour to complete the tool – which is much faster than other assessment tools and testified to the relevance of the tool in “capturing the state of management of the MPA”. The managers also indicated the relevance of BlueDiagnosis for them as a long-term monitoring and management tool for their MPA. This validates the practical interest of such a tool, since it is easy to use, i.e. it allows 1) rapid diagnosis and 2) its interpretation is intuitive. Indeed, it provides both qualitative and quantitative information, making it possible to summarize the management effectiveness of the MPA with a single graph.



### Engaging MPAs managers

These first feedbacks made it possible

- to confirm the hypotheses underlying the indicators we used in our tool and to adjust the tool so that the new version is even more relevant,
- to acquire new data on the status of Mediterranean MPAs.

For BlueSeeds, BlueDiagnosis has proven to be a powerful tool for engaging with managers, making it possible to understand the obstacles they face and to propose solutions for increasing MPA sustainability, particularly from the financial perspective.

## - BLUEMOORING

BlueMooring is a platform that enables protected area managers to effectively manage their mooring zones, collect mooring fees and communicate more easily with visitors. This platform is coupled with a web application for boaters and ecotourism professionals to book moorings and discover the conservation actions carried out on the site.

It was created and launched by BlueSeeds in 2021 in the framework of the Blue Incubator – Blue entrepreneurship development in Mediterranean MPAs project funded by the MAVA Foundation.



In 2019, BlueSeeds conducted an opportunity study about the relevance of creating an online booking system for the moorings deployed in the marine protected areas in the Mediterranean. The study highlighted that a majority of MPAs having deployed moorings to protect the *Posidonia oceanica* meadows from anchors lose up to more than 50% of the entrance fees at the collection stage. As a matter of fact, the collection of entrance fees during the touristic season is the most time and effort-consuming activity of the MPA staff.



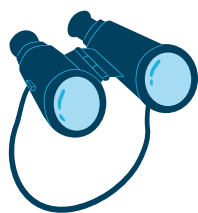
## The process

1. In 2021, BlueSeeds launched a **call for interest** to MPA managers willing to test the beta version of the tool. The SyMEL (Syndicat Mixte Espaces Littoraux de la Manche)—in charge of managing protected coastal sites in the French Manche department—applied and was selected to use BlueMooring to manage mooring zones in the Chausey archipelago. This collaboration provided BlueSeeds with valuable insights. Indeed, the SyMEL shared with us their **difficulty to collect data on visits and report data to higher authorities, and the difficulty they face to communicate crucial information with visitors such as restrictions, conduct, and navigation rules on the area.**

2. As part of the MEDSEAGRASS project in the Penisola del Sinis MPA, Sardinia (whose main objective is the protection of the priority habitat of Posidonia Oceanica meadow), the **implementation of an eco-fee to be reinvested in the MPA for the continuous conservation of seagrass meadows and the set up of the mooring management tool BlueMooring** have been planned for the beginning of 2022.

3. In June 2021, the **first version of the BlueMooring platform** is officially launched. It enables MPA managers to manage the use of eco-moorings by boaters in real-time. They can **easily monitor and report visits**, via a dashboard that helps them visualize occupancy of mooring zones and access to real-time booking details. Communication with visitors is made easier: managers can share current regulations and raise awareness on their conservation actions. An option to collect mooring fees allows managers to generate income to finance maintenance and marine conservation activities within the MPA.

4. In October 2021, Bluemooring has been identified as providing practical solutions for eco-mooring management in the Med and was presented to French mooring managers during the Mediterranean Mooring Forum in Marseille.



### Promising perspectives

Since the end of 2021, BlueSeeds has been developing new features that will be released in 2022, such as the management of moorings dedicated to ecotourism professionals (such as diving clubs) and monitoring their activities in the area; a special interface for ecotourism professionals with access to their activity history and the option to report field observations directly to the site manager; and optimized buoy maintenance with a notification system.



# OUR NETWORKS

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## - TOGETHER FOR THE MED

As part of the Together for the Med project, BlueSeeds is proud to lead, in collaboration with the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, a network of more than 50 partners involved in the reduction of fishing pressures in the Med.

### The diversity challenge

Since 2020, we work to strengthen and animate this very unique partnership. This network is made up of a strong diversity of actors across the Mediterranean: NGOs, international organizations, research centers, private companies, networks, and foundations. They work together to bring fisheries sustainability, reduce their impact on seagrass meadows and coralligenous habitats, reduce the accidental bycatch of cetaceans, seabirds, sea turtles, and sharks, or reduce the negative interactions between fishers and marine mammals.

Different cultures, different visions, different sizes, yet at every meeting we hold, we are happy to see that the will to work together is very strong.

### The construction of adapted tools

To make this network live, we have built tools adapted to the partners' demands. The main tool remains the [Together for the Med website](#), on which each project is promoted. We have also realized and published interviews of all project leaders and written blog articles on the success of the projects. This platform is used to strengthen the exchange of good practices internally, but also to communicate externally about the partnership and the projects.

Each quarter, we send out a newsletter that shows updates of the projects but also highlights new funding opportunities for the projects. The partners are also really active in the private Facebook group of the network.

To maintain a dialogue with the partners, we organize regular meetings. Last year, we met on several occasions: 3 steering committees and 3 communication task forces. These are precious moments that allow us to keep a good dynamic in the network.



TOGETHER  
FOR THE MED |

## MEDITERRANEAN POSIDONIA NETWORK

### Joining forces for the protection of the Posidonia

Posidonia Oceanica is considered a key habitat for many species, it plays a key role in protecting coasts from erosion and as a carbon sink for the environment. However, this strictly protected habitat has declined by 34% in the Mediterranean over the past 50 years due to multiple pressures, of which trawling, and anchoring are among the most severe.



Anchoring, however, remains largely unmanaged, both inside and outside Natura 2000 Mediterranean marine sites. It is in this context that the Mediterranean Posidonia Network (MPN) was created, supported by the French Office for Biodiversity.



MPN platform photo credits

### 2021, a common vision

The MPN is an international, cross-sectoral, and inclusive platform that aims to bring together a diversity of stakeholders with the common goal of achieving zero degradation of Posidonia meadows by 2030. In other words, the objective of the network is to protect Posidonia meadows from the pressures they face: anchoring, but also wastewater, fishing, coastal development, etc. To achieve this, four key areas of action have been identified: 1) Construction of a regulatory framework, 2) Implementation and monitoring of eco-mooring projects, 3) Raising awareness, 4) Improvement of knowledge and innovations.

### BlueSeeds, proud and active member of the Mediterranean Posidonia Network

In 2021, we joined the MPN network and we had the opportunity to participate in the very first MPN workshop in presential, which took place in Formentera between the 21st and 24th of September 2021, organized by the French Biodiversity Office and the Ministry of the Environment and Territory of the Balearic Island. Together with the partners, we co-create a roadmap for the development of the project in the coming months and years. Stakeholders from Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Montenegro, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey were present.

We also participated in the coordination taskforces, held online with the key players in the network.

Finally, we are supporting the OFB in the construction of the logical framework of the Posidonia project. This document will provide a common vision and long-term strategy that will guide the network over the next ten years.





Océan & Climat

## OCEAN & CLIMATE PLATFORM

The Ocean & Climate Platform is committed to making the voice of civil society heard and participates in the mobilization of ocean stakeholders on ocean, climate and biodiversity issues. It coordinates a strong network of more than 90 members from various sectors.

BlueSeeds is proud to be part of it.

Through the Ocean & Climate Platform, BlueSeeds is making its voice heard and fighting for the creation of new marine protected areas and effective conservation measures.



Ocean & Climate platform photo credits



## RESPECTOCEAN



RespectOcean photo credits

RespectOcean is a French network of actors committed to sustainable economic development in favor of the ocean.

RespectOcean promotes positive and inspiring solutions and initiatives, organizes debates, meetings, and conferences on the sustainable economy for the oceans.

Every year, RespectOcean organizes the Ocean pitch challenge, aimed at solution providers with a positive impact on the ocean.

For 2 years now, BlueSeeds is proud to be part of the jury of the contest.

## BLUESEEDS, A LINK IN THE MARINE CONSERVATION CHAIN

The support of our partners is essential.

We would like to thank them again for our collaboration, our common achievements, our shared successes.

Here is a non-exhaustive list of the organizations with which we have a lot of pleasure to work with:







BLUE  
SEEDS

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