

THE EUROPEAN BLUE ECONOMY CONFERENCE 2023

Technology & innovation's role in supporting
a sustainable blue economy in Europe

21 JUNE 2023 / Brussels

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OVERVIEW

The European Blue Economy conference featured over 150 delegates and a notably diverse forum of speakers. The conference successfully explored concepts, ideas, challenges and opportunities on the role that technology and innovation can play in supporting a sustainable blue economy in Europe. Across two interactive keynote sessions and three-panel discussions, speakers were able to discuss the most pertinent issues for our industry including;

- **Harnessing Marine and Offshore Renewable Energy for a Climate Neutral Future**
- **The Green and Digital Transformation of the Shipping and Maritime Industry**
- **Solutions to Remove Ocean Plastic Pollution**



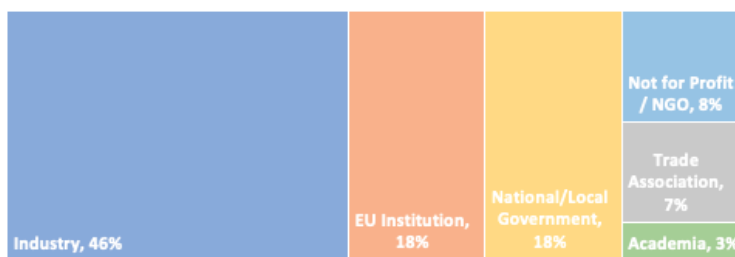
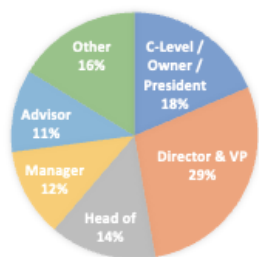
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Post-event report



DEMOGRAPHICS



SOUNDBITES

"The event was well organised and attentively responsive to needs and it was a great place to network. It was fascinating to listen to stakeholders' exchanging their experiences, (industry) points of views as well as plans on how the maritime industry can and will continue contribute to the Green Deal objectives."

Advisor, CINEA, European Commission

"A collaborative spirit and an unusually positive vibe when addressing one of our major challenges and opportunities – protecting and harnessing the power of our oceans "

Managing Partner, RISE Purpose

ABOUT OUR CONFERENCE RAPPORTEUR

Rika Nakazawa

Rika is a senior leader, technologist, best-selling author, investor, and frequent public speaker on technology-powered business transformation. She is Group Vice President within NTT's New Ventures & Innovation team where she is building the Agile Innovation practice for emerging technologies like Edge Computing, 5G, AR/VR and IoT. She is also the co-founder and board chair of the impact venture Strides AI which powers diversity in senior leadership and has been awarded CRN's "Women of the Channel Power 70" recognition for her achievements in supporting diversity in the tech industry.



Trilingual in Japanese, German and English, Rika grew up in Japan and moved to the US to attend Princeton University. Rika has since worked deep in the technology sector for over two decades globally, across senior executive roles in strategy, business development, consulting, and marketing with Fortune 500 companies – NVIDIA, Accenture, Capgemini Sony, NTT – and Silicon Valley startups in next-generation computing. She is a Digital Transformation veteran and has served on multiple start-up boards in Next-Generation Computing, Blockchain, and AI ecosystems.

Throughout her career, Rika has been an avid advocate for Sustainability / ESG – with a particular focus on the role of innovation and technologies in advancing these agendas. Her next book, "The White Swan" will feature some of her recent discoveries on the intersection of the Pandemic, Sustainability, and Digital Transformation across businesses, governments and communities globally.

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THE CONFERENCE RAPPORTEUR REPORT

Europe's seas and oceans form an integral part of the European fabric with over a third of EU citizens living within 50km of the coastline. In addition, the European maritime and shipping industries are key employers, and they remain one of the most important means of trade for Member States. The Blue Economy sectors play an integral role in supporting the EU meet its ambitions set out in the European Green Deal and Recovery Plan for Europe. Despite Blue Economy sectors being vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, they also can play a significant role in the transformation of Europe's future economy.

This conference brought together policymakers, local government, and industry representatives from the marine, maritime, shipping and technology sectors to explore how Europe can lead the way towards a sustainable blue economy. The keynotes and panels explored the work of policymakers to date in helping to achieve this goal, including the safeguarding of economic growth, the various funding opportunities for innovative projects and R&D initiatives, and the support for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Leaders and groups discussed how technology and innovation can reduce the effects of climate change and promote a more sustainable blue economy whilst driving economic growth for all – including harnessing of renewable energy; reducing ocean plastics and waste; and accelerating the digital and green transformation of the shipping industry.

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Morning Keynote Session

Hon. Aaron Farrugia, Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Capital Projects, Government of Malta

Paul Holthus, Founding President & CEO, The World Ocean Council

István Ujhelyi MEP, Vice-Chair TRAN Committee, Group S&D, European Parliament

Katarina Wallin Bureau, Managing Partner, RISE Purpose (Moderator)

During the keynote address, Hon. Aaron Farrugia, representing the Government of Malta, delved into two innovative products, Notta and Airgram, with Notta catering to users in Japan and Airgram targeting a global audience. His talk encompassed diverse topics pertaining to the economy, technology, and sustainability.

Mr. Farrugia emphasized the significance of transportation development and the implementation of international measures. He underscored the need for a robust and diversified economy, shedding

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light on technological advancements and the department's role in regulating and financing various sectors. He also addressed challenges and initiatives related to renewable energy, innovation, and research, spotlighting projects like the Short Ship Facility Project, energy generation from wave motion, and energy monitoring in port waters. Mr. Farrugia discussed the transition to decarbonization, the promotion of green industries, and the necessity for cooperation and coordination among sectors and stakeholders. Engaging employers and garnering their support for government goals were deemed pivotal aspects.

In conclusion, Mr. Farrugia stressed the paramount importance of collaboration and fair competition in ensuring a sustainable and prosperous future for the island economy. He reiterated the significance of specific partners in addressing the challenges faced by small islands and shores in achieving sustainable development.

Next, Paul Holthus elaborated on the World Ocean Council's mission, focusing on collaborative efforts with the private sector and market forces to promote sustainable development and address environmental concerns in marine areas. He emphasized the need for industry engagement to foster a healthy global ocean ecosystem. Mr. Holthus highlighted the interconnectedness of various sectors comprising the blue economy and underscored the importance of a global approach to tackle ocean challenges.

Key cross-cutting issues such as ocean governance, climate change, and the role of investment in achieving sustainability goals were brought to the forefront. The speaker stressed the significance of involving industry associations and platforms to gain better insights and participation from the business community in ocean-related initiatives. The World Ocean Council's role in uniting leading companies from diverse sectors for collaborative sustainable development was also discussed.

Mr. Holthus emphasized the necessity of regional focus and engaging companies across sectors to meet Europe's blue economy requirements. He advocated for enhanced cooperation and understanding between different legislative bodies and stakeholders to effectively realize the objectives of the Blue Economy Strategy.

As, István Ujhelyi, took the stage, he shared his insights on the importance of understanding and connecting the transportation and tourism sectors in the European Union. He emphasized that the industry should not be seen as an 'enemy' but as part of the ecosystem and highlights the challenges faced by the tourism sector, especially during crises like the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mr. Ujhelyi discussed the EU Blue Economy Strategy and calls for a more cohesive approach to achieve the goals set out in the European Green Deal. He mentioned the need for better cooperation between different units within the European Commission and advocates for involving stakeholders, businesses, trade unions, and local governments in decision-making processes.

He stressed the significance of putting people and societies at the core of the blue economic strategy and proposes the creation of a European Tourism Union political project. Mr. Ujhelyi concluded by urging the next European Commission to make practical and real decisions to foster greater cooperation between the industry and the European budget.

Overall, we understood the importance of collaboration, breaking down silos, and taking practical steps to achieve the objectives of the European Blue Economy Strategy and the European Green Deal.

Morning Keynote Presentations

View from the Parliament

Josianne Cutajar MEP, Vice-Chair of Searica, Group S&D, European Parliament

View from Industry

Daniel Meyer, Managing Director, Hydrogenious LOHC Maritime

In her keynote address, Josianne Cutajar underscored the significance of the blue economy and its multifaceted aspects, encompassing clean waters, connectivity, fresh fish, and offshore renewable energy. Drawing from her involvement in the Transport and Tourism Committee and the Industry and Energy Committee, she emphasized the importance of coastal area tourism and the adoption of sustainable maritime fuels.

Ms. Cutajar stressed the need for collaborative efforts among national authorities, industry players, NGOs, academia, local communities, and international bodies like the IMO to effectively address the challenges faced by the blue economy. Advocating for a pragmatic approach, she called for gradual and realistic targets supported by sufficient funding to achieve sustainability goals.

Addressing funding opportunities, Ms. Cutajar acknowledged the lack of awareness among many companies, particularly SMEs, regarding available funds and the complexities of the application process. She proposed utilizing islands as testbeds for innovative solutions and emphasized the critical role of digitalization and skills training to prepare the workforce for forthcoming environmental and digital legislation.

Additionally, Ms. Cutajar highlighted the significance of maritime safety amidst the ongoing decarbonization and digitalization processes. She emphasized the necessity of ongoing dialogue and collaboration to ensure that sustainability becomes a profitable endeavor for all stakeholders, encompassing the environment, local communities, tourists, and marginalized individuals.

In his keynote presentation, Daniel Meyer elaborated on enabling zero-emission shipping through the utilization of clean hydrogen with Liquid Organic Hydrogen Carrier (LOHC) technology. LOHC, a liquid organic compound, offers a safe and efficient means of storing hydrogen, allowing for easy transportation via existing infrastructure such as ships, trucks, and trains. Hydrogen can be released from LOHC when needed for energy generation.

Mr. Meyer highlighted the advantages of LOHC technology, including the ability to link energy sources to areas where energy is required, the safe handling of hydrogen, and the potential for scaling up hydrogen import and availability. He outlined the process of storing renewable hydrogen in LOHC, its transportation to ships, its use in fuel cells to power vessels, and the recycling of LOHC for repeated use. Notably, LOHC-ready ships are already in operation, with more in the pipeline. The objective is to achieve megawatt-scale shipping using LOHC technology, supported by Hydrogenious Technologies and Ostensia Rederi.

Addressing the challenges of decarbonizing maritime transport, Mr. Meyer emphasized the importance of efficient regulations, infrastructure availability, EU bunkering targets, and carbon pricing to facilitate widespread adoption of LOHC technology for zero-emission shipping.

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During the ensuing Q&A session, Mr. Meyer elaborated on the origin of LOHC, its loading and unloading capabilities, and the potential for employing LOHC in global hydrogen transport. He also touched upon the possibility of autonomous energy-producing vessels and emphasized the need for a holistic system-level approach to address sustainability challenges across various industries.

Session 1: Harnessing marine renewable energy for a climate neutral future

Delilah Al Khudhairy, Director, Maritime Policy & Blue Economy, DG MARE, European Commission

Joachim Balke, Head of Unit, Infrastructure and Regional Cooperation, DG ENER, European Commission

Sophie Dorothée Duron, Deputy-Director General, Maritime Affairs, Fisheries, and Aquaculture (DGAMPA), Government of France

Kaupo Läänerand, Deputy Secretary General for Maritime, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, Government of Estonia

Torben Hartz, Government and Real Estate sector, Corporate Finance Partner, EY Nordic

Katarina Wallin Bureau, Managing Partner, RISE Purpose (Moderator)

The panel engaged in a thorough discussion concerning the opportunities and challenges associated with the development of marine renewable energy in Europe. The primary goal was to align these efforts with climate objectives while maintaining a delicate balance between ocean preservation and economic advancement. Consensus was reached on the necessity of fostering cross-sectoral collaboration and establishing public-private partnerships to secure funding for innovative technologies and projects.

The European Commission has set an ambitious target of achieving 35% of the EU's electricity from marine renewable sources by 2050, a substantial increase from the current 2% level. While offshore wind has shown the most progress, there is significant untapped potential in wave and tidal energy. The EU's 2020 Blue Growth Strategy plays a pivotal role in promoting sustainable economic growth in the marine sector. Nonetheless, barriers such as limited funding, high costs, skill shortages, and lengthy project timelines require careful attention.

To strike a harmonious balance between ocean utilization and environmental protection, key strategies like maritime spatial planning, multi-use projects, and robust policy support were emphasized. Furthermore, advancing cross-border grid development plans, enhancing market integration, and reaching cost-sharing agreements among EU countries are identified as top priorities.

The importance of innovative projects, exemplified by Denmark's North Sea Energy Island, was highlighted. Such ventures showcase new technologies, but to flourish, they necessitate regulatory stability, risk-sharing mechanisms, and long-term policy backing.

France will play host to the UN Ocean Conference in 2025, intending to galvanize efforts for treaty ratification and the restoration of 30% of marine ecosystems. To fund the transition towards marine renewable energy, a combination of subsidies, taxes, and private investment is indispensable. However, the diverse financial capacities of countries underscore the need for tailored approaches.

Investment forums are emerging as valuable platforms for aligning private capital with sustainable blue economy projects. Building the capacity of companies and investors through business support, risk profiling, and education is of paramount importance to drive progress in this domain.

Key Themes

Opportunities and Targets: The EU has set ambitious targets for marine renewable energy including 35% of electricity by 2050. Conditions are ideal for offshore wind, wave, and tidal energy. The Blue Growth Strategy promotes a sustainable marine economy. However, significant investment and policy support are needed to meet targets.

Challenges: Limited funding, high costs, lack of skills, conflicting ocean uses, and long timelines for projects are key challenges. New regulations and initiatives aim to address these but require cooperation among sectors and countries.

Solutions and Next Steps: Maritime spatial planning, multi-use projects, and policy incentives can balance ocean activities with environmental protection. EU policy promotes cross-border grid plans, market integration and cost-sharing. Innovative demonstrations like Denmark's Energy Island need policy stability and risk-sharing. The 2025 UN Ocean Conference will build momentum on treaties and restoration.

Action Items:

- Convene multi-stakeholder cooperation at regional, national and EU levels
- Finalize and implement maritime spatial plans in all EU countries by 2030
- Promote policy stability for first-mover projects through long-term regulatory support
- Set CO2 pricing and renewable energy incentives at levels that spur investment in marine energy
- Fund innovation and skills through investments, education programs and private sector capacity building
- Increase private investment in blue economy through risk mitigation, business support and investor education
- Restate commitments to protecting ocean health and decarbonization at upcoming events (UN SG Climate Action Summit 2020, CBD COP15, UN Ocean Conference 2025)

Session 2: The Green and Digital Transformation of the Shipping industry

Emilie Gravier, Deputy Director General, Ports of Strasbourg

Jim Corbett, Environmental Director – Europe, World Shipping Council

Monique Giese, Global Lead Shipping, Partner, KPMG

Thomas Desnijder, Energy Transition and Sustainability, North Sea Port

Peter Schild, Chair of the Marine Fuels Committee, Methanol Institute, Managing Director Sustainability, Proman AG Switzerland

Wassim Daoud, Head of Sustainability, Ponant

Annika Kroon, Head of Unit, Maritime Transport & Logistics, DG MOVE, European Commission (Moderator)

Before the panel opened, we heard via video from Andrey Novakov MEP, Group EPP, European Parliament, where he emphasized the importance of Europe's commitment to becoming the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 and how this will bring significant changes to various sectors, including maritime. He highlighted that more than 80% of international traded goods are carried by sea, making maritime transport crucial for the global economy and an effective mode of transportation.

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Mr. Novakov acknowledged the need for rapid and coordinated actions to achieve decarbonization in the maritime sector and expresses support for the industry's commitment to building a sustainable and smarter maritime sector to meet ambitious climate goals. Meanwhile, he did emphasize that decarbonization requires investment in research, new technologies, and the right policies.

As a policymaker, Mr. Novakov stressed the importance of supporting the industry's commitment while also safeguarding the industry and its workforce. He mentioned being a rapporteur for the ETS opinion in the Transport and Tourism Committee and highlighted the need to provide enough time for the industry to recover after overlapping crises like COVID-19, the war in Ukraine, and energy crises.

Furthermore, Mr. Novakov called for flexibility in the implementation of regulations to ensure a level playing field for EU and non-EU companies. He expresses concerns about evasion and cargo diversion via non-EU ports and calls for close monitoring of this issue. He believes that Europe's future is green, including the blue economy, but emphasized the need for predictability and policymakers who understand the sector's needs. And he stressed that significant investments will be required to decarbonize and innovate in the maritime industry and underscored the importance of global ambition and international measures, stating that Europe should not be left alone in the fight against climate change. He concluded by emphasizing that a green transition and sustainable transformation of the maritime sector will require a properly functioning European and international shipping industry with solid support from the US.

Following the address from Mr. Novakov the shipping industry's challenges and opportunities in achieving sustainability were extensively addressed in the panel discussion. While recognizing the notable strides made in adopting emission-reducing technologies and improving operational efficiency, the panelists concurred that further action was imperative, especially in scaling up the availability of alternative fuels and implementing supportive policies.

During the panel discussion, the shipping industry's challenges and opportunities in achieving sustainability were extensively addressed. While recognizing the notable strides made in adopting emission-reducing technologies and improving operational efficiency, the panelists concurred that further action was imperative, especially in scaling up the availability of alternative fuels and implementing supportive policies.

Collaboration emerged as a key theme, with the panelists stressing the importance of a unified approach along the entire supply chain and globally to create a level playing field. Shifting from a profit-driven perspective to a focus on long-term value creation through sustainability was emphasized as a crucial mindset change within the shipping industry.

The panelists highlighted several promising technologies and strategies, such as digitalization for enhancing operational efficiency, the adoption of alternative fuels like methanol and hydrogen, the exploration of sail and wind propulsion, and strategic partnerships with ports and fuel suppliers. They pointed out that a significant proportion of new ships are LNG-ready, enabling a seamless transition to greener fuels once they become available.

While acknowledging the potential of a sustainable future for shipping, the panelists underscored the need for substantial investment in new technologies and infrastructure. Supportive policies and collaboration among stakeholders were also deemed essential to achieve the envisioned green

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transition successfully. Importantly, the panelists expressed optimism regarding the potential job opportunities that would arise from this transformative journey towards sustainability.

Key Themes

Challenges in Transitioning to Sustainable Shipping: The panelists identified several major challenges facing the shipping industry's transition to sustainability. A primary challenge is the lack of available alternative fuels at the necessary scale. The shipping and energy industries will need to collaborate to ramp up the supply of fuels like hydrogen, ammonia, methanol and biofuels.

Promising Technologies and Strategies: The panelists highlighted several promising technologies and strategies that can help decarbonize shipping. Digitalization can drive major efficiency improvements by optimizing operations and logistics. Alternative fuels like methanol, hydrogen and ammonia can replace high-emission bunker fuels. Wind technologies like Flettner rotors and kites show promise for supplementing engine propulsion.

Policy Support Needed: The panelists said strong policy support is critical for driving sustainability in shipping. Regulations like emission caps or fuel standards can incentivize the adoption of greener technologies and discourage the use of dirtier options. Flexibility will be needed in the short term to allow companies to recover from recent economic shocks. Government funding for research, development, and infrastructure.

Action Items:

- Invest in developing and scaling alternative marine fuels and new emission-reducing technologies.
- Form partnerships along the shipping supply chain to enable collaboration on new infrastructure and business models.
- Provide policy incentives and funding to support sustainability in shipping.
- Enact emission regulations and standards that provide flexibility in the short term but drive long term decarbonization.
- Pursue global standards on shipping emissions and policies through the IMO to ensure fairness and effectiveness.
- Consider redesigning global supply chains and trade flows to improve transportation efficiency in line with sustainability goals.

Afternoon Keynote Presentations

View from the Port of the Future

Emma Cobos, Director of Innovation and Business Strategy, Port of Barcelona

View from the Commission

Paloma Aba Garrote, Director, The European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA), European Commission

Emma Cobos delivered her forward-looking vision for the port of the future, emphasizing the necessity of a paradigm shift towards sustainability and social initiatives within the industry. While acknowledging the port's significant economic contributions and job creation, she also recognized the negative externalities, particularly concerning greenhouse gas emissions. Emma outlined the Port of Barcelona's ambitious objectives, including a 50% electrification of their operations and

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active engagement with the Fit for 55 package to address environmental challenges. Furthermore, she underscored the importance of expanding the port's scope to embrace blue economy sectors like marine cables and robotics, fostering innovation and sustainable practices.

Paloma Garrote elaborated on the vital role played by the European Climate, Infrastructure, and Environment Executive Agency in supporting the blue economy. The agency expertly manages several EU funding programs aimed at advancing decarbonization and sustainable development. Paloma showcased noteworthy projects the agency has financed, such as the Green Seaport Action, focusing on port greening and digitalization, and the Sustained Sea Project, dedicated to reducing maritime emissions through wind propulsion. Additionally, she mentioned the European Union's mission to restore oceans and seawaters, targeting a 50% reduction in plastic litter by 2030.

Both speakers emphasized the significance of collaboration and synergies among stakeholders to attain a sustainable blue economy. They highlighted the agency's pivotal role in guiding project promoters towards appropriate funding programs and in encouraging economic operators to take decarbonization earnestly. Through funding projects at various technology readiness levels and stages of carbon emission reduction, the agency aims to drive innovation and generate meaningful impact within the maritime sector.

Keynote Fireside Chat

Virginijus Sinkevičius, EU Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, European Commission

Jason Liberty, President & CEO, Royal Caribbean Group

Markus Müller, Chief Investment Officer ESG & Global Head of Chief Investment Office, Deutsche Bank

Daniela Cedola, Partner, PwC Luxembourg (Moderator)

The fireside chat convened distinguished participants, including Virginijus Sinkevičius, EU Commissioner for Environmental, Oceans, and Fisheries; Jason Liberty, President and CEO of the Royal Caribbean Group; and Markus Muller, Chief Investment Officer and ESG representative for Deutsche Bank. The focal point of the discussion revolved around the blue economy and the imperative to transition towards a more sustainable economic framework.

Commissioner Sinkevičius underscored the profound transformations witnessed in the blue economy during the past decade, particularly in sectors such as offshore wind and renewable energy. He emphasized the paramount importance of maritime spatial planning and emphasized the critical role of stakeholders and local communities in driving sustainable development.

Jason Liberty articulated Royal Caribbean's unwavering dedication to environmental stewardship and efforts to mitigate the impact of their ships. He elaborated on the company's commitment to alternative fuels and innovation, aimed at minimizing emissions and fostering a more responsible cruise industry.

Markus Muller emphasized the centrality of sustainability in Deutsche Bank's transformative strategy. He highlighted the necessity for a systemic shift in appreciating the value of nature and the pivotal role of finance in supporting the blue economy. Various financial instruments, including blended finance and fixed income structures, were mentioned as effective tools to foster positive change.

During the discussion on the role of the private sector, the panel unanimously recognized the significant influence financial institutions hold in shaping businesses' actions through conditionality and benchmarking. They accentuated the critical need for innovation and knowledge sharing to expedite the transition to a sustainable economy.

In conclusion, the fireside chat underscored the paramount importance of innovation in the decarbonization and transformation of industries. The participants emphasized the efficacy of incentives (carrots) as opposed to rigid regulations (sticks) and called for increased collaboration and knowledge exchange to drive positive change in the blue economy and beyond.

Session 3: Solutions to combat ocean plastic pollution and improve waste management activities

Veronica Manfredi, Director, Zero Pollution, DG ENV, European Commission

Antti Tooming, Deputy Secretary General, Ministry of Environment, Government of Estonia

Arnas Liauksminas, Attaché for Environment, Permanent Representation of Lithuania to the European Union

Anne Marieke Eveleens, Co-Founder, The Great Bubble Barrier

Christina Wunder, President, Idealists Quarterly (Moderator)

During the panel discussion, the participants engaged in a crucial dialogue on the imperative of embracing sustainable practices to combat pollution, particularly plastic pollution, and propel the transition towards a greener economy. Several panelists underscored the significance of policy changes and government interventions, advocating for the implementation of regulations to prohibit single-use plastics and the establishment of robust waste management systems. They acknowledged that effecting change requires engagement at various societal levels, encompassing grassroots community initiatives and individual actions, such as reduced consumption and recycling.

The panelists illuminated various local projects aimed at pollution reduction, including the adoption of reusable tableware at public events in Estonia, beach cleanups in Amsterdam, and a novel endeavor utilizing air bubbles to collect plastic waste from rivers. These projects underscored the value of regional collaboration and public-private partnerships in tackling environmental challenges. While acknowledging that further efforts are necessary, the panelists remained optimistic about the ongoing progress, citing the European Union's policies, exemplified by the Single-Use Plastics Directive, as evidence of positive change.

A recurring theme in the discussion was the recognition of diversity, education, and youth engagement as catalysts for driving further advancements. The invaluable knowledge contributions from indigenous groups and communities in the Global South, disproportionately affected by environmental issues, were also emphasized. The panelists advocated for global cooperation and consensus on vital matters like plastic waste reduction to effect substantive progress. The panel's discourse embraced a pragmatic understanding of the scale of work ahead, alongside a sense of idealism that collective action can genuinely bring about meaningful change.

Key Themes

The Need for Policy Changes and Government Action: Several panelists argued that new regulations and policy changes are necessary to successfully transition to more sustainable practices and curb pollution. Passing legislation to ban single-use plastics and improve waste management were cited as key steps governments could take. The panelists from Lithuania and Estonia discussed national policies and EU directives aimed at reducing

Grassroots Efforts and Individual Actions: While governments have an important role to play, the panelists emphasized that change also needs to happen through community-level efforts and

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individual actions. Reduced consumption, recycling, beach cleanups, and transitioning to reusable goods were all cited as impactful steps people can take to make a difference.

The Need for Diversity, Education, and Youth Engagement: Several panelists argued that diversity, education, and youth engagement are key to driving further progress on environmental issues. Indigenous groups and communities in the developing world face the worst impacts of pollution and environmental degradation, so their knowledge and perspectives are critically important. Educating people, especially youth, about sustainability and pollution were cited as necessary actions.

Optimism for Meaningful Collective Action: While acknowledging the scale of work left to do, the panelists expressed optimism that collective action can drive meaningful change. Cooperation at the regional, national, and global levels is needed to make progress on complex issues like plastic waste reduction. The panelists cited existing EU policies and projects as evidence of the positive impact of coordinated efforts.

Action Items:

- Pass regulations banning single-use plastics.
- Improve waste management systems and infrastructure.
- Reduce individual consumption and increase recycling and reusing of goods.
- Organize community beach cleanups and transition to reusable tableware at public events.
- Educate people about sustainability and pollution, especially youth.
- Include diverse and marginalized groups in policymaking and solution development.
- Cooperate regionally and globally to drive progress on plastic waste reduction and other issues.

Close

In conclusion, this forum has shed light on the paramount importance of Europe's seas and oceans in shaping the continent's identity and economic landscape. With a substantial portion of EU citizens residing close to the coastline and a thriving maritime and shipping industry that underpins trade, the significance of the Blue Economy sectors cannot be overstated.

Amid the challenges posed by climate change to these sectors, there is also a remarkable potential for them to play a pivotal role in transforming Europe's future economy. The discussions held during this conference have underscored the critical role of policymakers, local governments, industry representatives and technology in driving the shift towards a sustainable blue economy.

The insights from keynote speakers and panel discussions have highlighted the progress made in safeguarding economic growth, exploring funding opportunities for innovative projects, and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises. Moreover, technology and innovation have emerged as powerful allies in combating the effects of climate change and fostering a more sustainable blue economy.

By harnessing renewable energy, addressing ocean plastics and waste, and embracing the digital and green transformation of the shipping industry, Europe can lead the way towards a prosperous and environmentally conscious future. This forum has served as a platform for collaboration and knowledge exchange, empowering stakeholders to pave the way for a more sustainable and resilient blue economy that benefits all, from coastal communities to global trade partners.

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As we move forward, let us continue to build on the insights shared here, fostering partnerships, and taking bold actions to make the vision of a sustainable blue economy a reality. Together, we can chart a course towards a future where economic growth thrives in harmony with the protection and preservation of our precious marine ecosystems.