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European Maritime Day
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BLACK SEA BEYWATCH

Black Sea Blue Economy Youth and Women Watch

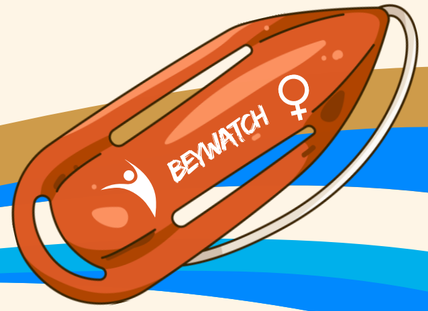
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Emerging Skills for Blue Careers in Black Sea Port Cities

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INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR BLACK SEA STUDIES
ICBSS
BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Blue jobs are growing and changing shape

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The skills question starts with where the jobs are, and with the new rules shaping them

4.88 M

people employed in the EU blue economy (2023 estimate)

53%

of EU blue-economy jobs are in coastal tourism (2022)

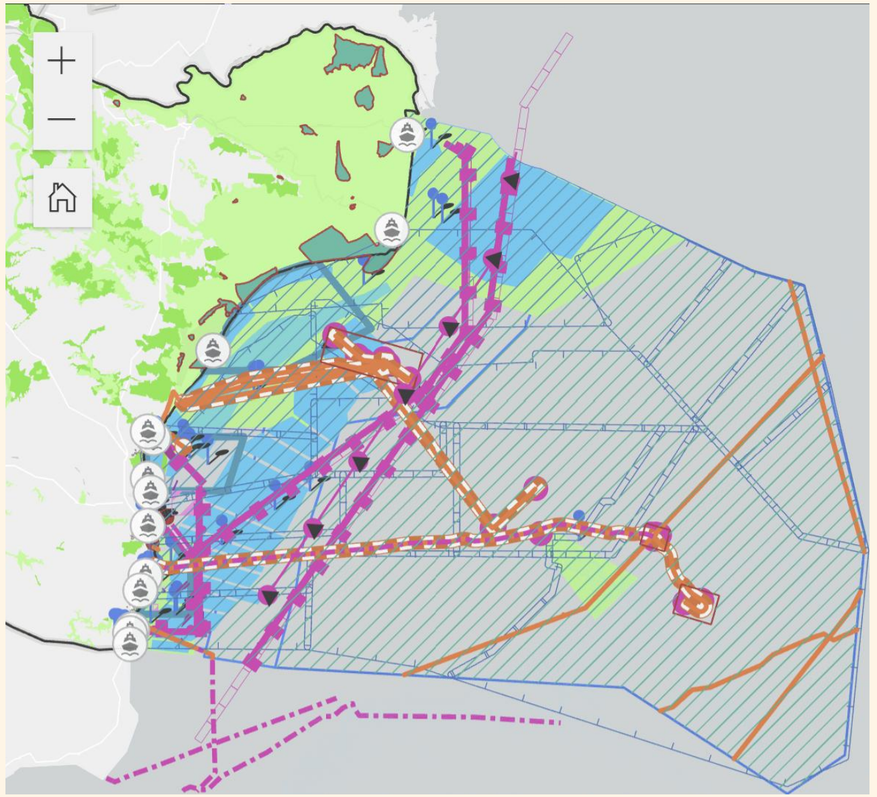
+42%

growth in offshore wind GVA, 2021–2022: the fastest-growing sector

2.5 M

jobs in Europe's port ecosystem, spread across 1,200+ ports

Romanian MS Plan



Source: https://observator.mdlpa.ro/ https://arcg.is/50Cn4

2016
Legal framework for maritime spatial planning (GO 18/2016)

Nov 2023
Maritime Spatial Plan adopted (GO 97/2023)

2024
Offshore Wind Law
Fishing Law

Aug 2025
National ICZM Strategy and ICZM Plan approved

Sources: EU Blue Economy Report 2025 (DG MARE & JRC); BLUE PORTS project (blue-ports.eu); European MSP Platform, Romania country profile; Romanian Ministry of Energy.

Port cities are socio-ecological systems

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Lessons from Romania’s Black Sea coast and the Danube Delta

Constanța

The Black Sea’s largest port; grain corridor for the region; ambitions as an offshore-wind logistics hub

Mangalia

Shipyard town and pilot area for Romania–Bulgaria cross-border MSP (Mangalia–Shabla)

Coastal resorts

From Mamaia to Vama Veche: a short tourism season, beach erosion and a crowded coastal strip

Danube Delta

Sulina and Sfântu Gheorghe: a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, small fishing communities, remote villages

What these places tell us

1. The real skills gaps sit at the interfaces: port–city, land–sea, economy–nature
2. Planning instruments arrived fast (MSP 2023, ICZM 2025); implementation capacity is now the bottleneck
3. Projects such as T4BS showed the value of hybrid profiles: digital + sustainability + people skills

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Balancing growth and protection

Ports, cities and coastal communities share one social and spatial context

GROWTH	PROTECTION	BALANCE THROUGH
Port expansion, grain and energy corridors, Danube–Black Sea logistics	Air and water quality, coastal habitats, liveable port neighbourhoods	**Green-port strategies and port–city interface planning**
Offshore wind and new energy infrastructure at sea	Fisheries, migratory birds and seabed habitats	**MSP, multi-use design and cumulative impact assessment**
Coastal tourism, marinas and real-estate pressure	Beaches, dunes, erosion control and Natura 2000 sites	**ICZM, nature-based solutions and carrying-capacity limits**

Skills that make the balance work

- Systems and trade-off thinking
- Impact assessment: environmental, social, cumulative
- Negotiation and participatory governance
- Monitoring with data and indicators
- A justice lens: who gains, who pays?

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What MSP practice teaches us about skills

Insights from the European MSP Platform and Black Sea regional expertise



Skills that MSP demands

Spatial data literacy
GIS, EMODnet, Copernicus, scenario mapping

Multi-use thinking
combining transport, wind, aquaculture, tourism and conservation etc

Facilitation & negotiation
structured stakeholder dialogue, conflict resolution

Land–sea interactions
an ecosystem-based approach from catchment to coast

Cross-border cooperation
one sea, six riparian states, only two in the EU

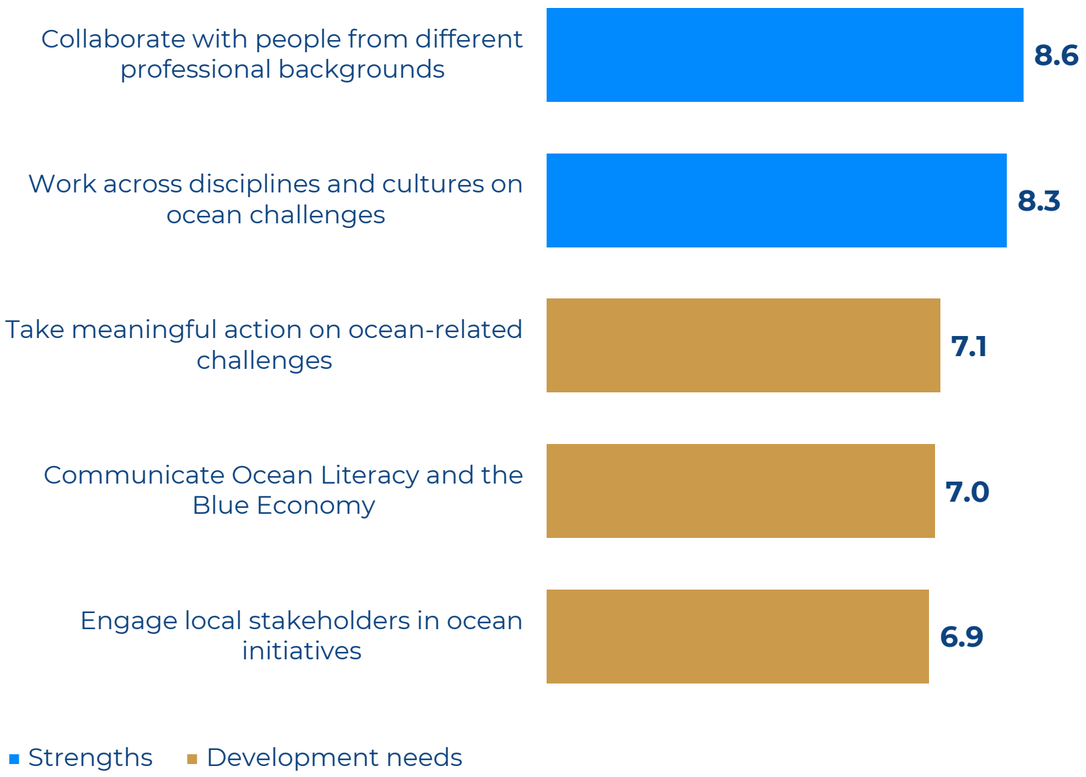
Tools: e.g. Blue Ports Academy - European MSP Platform training catalogue - MSP Challenge serious game (MSPglobal) - FLORES MOOC on ocean multi-use

What young blue professionals tell us

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EU4Ocean Summer School on Ocean Literacy & Collaboration, Milazzo, Italy, September 2026 · pre-school survey (n = 24)

Average self-assessment (0–10)



STRENGTH

A highly collaborative, transdisciplinary cohort

GAP

Hands-on stakeholder engagement and Blue Economy literacy

ASK

Practical tools, real cases and networks that last beyond the course

A skills compass for Black Sea port cities

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Six clusters, ideally combined in T-shaped profiles: deep in one, fluent across all

Net-zero ports & energy

Alternative fuels, energy efficiency, onshore power, offshore-wind logistics, circular waste management

Digital & ocean data

GIS and remote sensing, EMODnet and Copernicus, port community systems, digital twins

Planning & governance

MSP and ICZM, land–sea interactions, EU and BSEC frameworks, cross-border cooperation

Stakeholder engagement

Facilitation, participatory mapping, conflict mediation, co-creation with local communities

Communication & ocean literacy

Translating science for citizens, investors and decision-makers, across languages

Equity & blue justice

Including women, youth and small-scale users; assessing the social impact of blue projects

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Universities as skills brokers

Working with local actors, adapting curricula, partnering with training centres

2 Coordinating with local actors

- Joint skills boards with port authorities, municipalities, employers and NGOs that define needs together
- Challenge-based courses on real local cases: port–city interface, erosion, dredged sediment
- Field stations as living labs, e.g. the Sfântu Gheorghe research station in the Danube Delta
- Co-creation with communities, e.g. CO-NOURISH: reusing dredged sediment with Delta associations

3 Are curricula adapting?

- Programmes are updated, but accreditation moves slower than policy: MSP (2023) and ICZM (2025) came faster than new courses
- New programmes are emerging, e.g. the DELTA-HUB master's on delta systems and Earth observation (University of Bucharest)
- Links with training centres are still ad hoc: CERONAV in Constanța (new offshore and wind training campus, 2026) could pair with degrees

The bridge: EU micro-credentials (Council Recommendation, 2022): short certified modules that stack onto degrees

Where to improve these skills

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Networks and programmes already open to students and young professionals

BLUE PORTS

Training and certification for port sustainability staff, e-learning and the BLUE PORTS Academy (EMFAF)

blue-ports.eu

Blue Careers projects

BlueAquaEdu and seven sister projects, e.g. COASTAL PRO, NextBlueGeneration, BOUTCAR, uBlueTec

blueaquaedu.eu/networks

Black Sea Young Ambassadors

Early-career ocean professionals from riparian countries; launched 2020 under Black Sea CONNECT, continued in BRIDGE-BS

Black Sea SRIA community

RethinkBlue COST Action

WG3 Port cities & coastal communities; COST mobility grants and training schools until October 2027

rethinkblue.eu

EU4Ocean, Youth4Ocean IOI Academy Ocean100+

Summer schools such as Milazzo 2026, Young Ocean Advocates for the Black Sea, Black Sea IOI Academy

EU4Ocean Coalition

EU Blue Careers guide

“Your Guide to Starting a Career in the Blue Economy”, European Commission, 2026 edition

DG MARE

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RethinkBlue: doors open beyond the Action

Publications and upcoming events open to participants from outside RethinkBlue

Read: open-access outputs

FEATURED · co-authored by RethinkBlue members

Rethinking the Blue Economy: integrating social science for sustainability and justice

Penca, ..., Văidianu, ... (2025), npj Ocean Sustainability 4, 40 · doi.org/10.1038/s44183-025-00138-1

- Forthcoming open-access edited book: Rethinking the Blue Economy: New Perspectives
- WG3 comparative study of six European port cities and their adaptive capacity (ongoing)
- Conference talks and webinars online: YouTube @RethinkBlue

Join: open events and calls

26 OCTOBER 2026 · 14:00–15:00 CET · ONLINE

Mentorship webinar: “Gender, Careers and Allyship in Academia and Policy”

Public link on rethinkblue.eu; the session will be recorded

- Become a member: apply online to any Working Group, open until the Action ends in October 2027
- Training schools, short-term scientific missions and Young Researcher & Innovator Grants (travel funding for members)
- Follow calls: rethinkblue.eu · LinkedIn · Instagram

From skills to action

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What each actor can do to close the gap



Students & young professionals

- Build a T-shaped profile
- Join networks and projects
- Seek field and stakeholder experience early



Universities

- Co-design challenge-based courses with ports and municipalities
- Joint Black Sea summer schools
- Teach technical and social sciences side by side



Ports & port cities

- Traineeships and mentoring
- Open port and coastal data for learning
- Youth engagement in management and MSP consultations



Policy

- Mutual recognition of blue-skills certificates across the basin
- Mobility funding for Black Sea youth and women
- Skills targets in MSP and the Common Maritime Agenda

Women and young people to be consider as co-designers of Black Sea port cities, not only their future workforce

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Thank You

https://maritime-forum.ec.europa.eu/theme/governance/european-maritime-day-my-country_en

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