

## EU marine governance gets a boost as new European research project sets sail

*EU marine governance must evolve to meet the goals and objectives established in the European Green Deal. A shift is needed from the current largely fragmented nature of marine governance toward a more cross-cutting and agile arrangement, one that is in sync with wider developments taking place at sea, at shores and on land. PERMAGOV, a recently launched Horizon Europe project, sets out to achieve that by piloting a novel multi-level governance approach for various regional seas and national waters around Europe, targeting four areas of key importance to sustainable development: maritime transport, marine energy, marine life, and marine litter.*



Photo courtesy: Pixabay

**Wageningen, Netherlands, 7 February 2023:** The European Green Deal aims to tackle some of the biggest challenges facing Europe and the world, among them environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, climate change, and pollution. The promise of this ambitious legislative package is to transform the EU into the first climate-neutral continent by 2050, with a competitive and data-agile economy decoupled from fossil fuels, zero net greenhouse gas emissions, and a society where no one is left behind (green, digital and just transition).

Achieving the European Green Deal requires a concerted effort across multiple areas that are closely related (e.g. environment, climate, energy, transportation), with success also dependent on transformative

action in marine governance. Oceans are vital to life above and below ground, so their sustainable exploitation will be necessary to ensuring their effective functioning - as a climate regulator, as source of clean air, energy, jobs, and food, as one of the main trading routes - for generations to come.

However, the current setup of marine governance is not conducive to reaching Green Deal objectives, because it is hampered by institutional barriers, lack of coherent policy mechanisms, and ineffective governance systems. Marine governance must evolve to become more agile and flexible, cross-sectoral and multi-actor, in tune with changing dynamics in policy, science, technology, industry and society.

This is exactly what PERMAGOV, the new Horizon Europe project, sets out to achieve. Over the next four years, PERMAGOV will set out to support the improvement of EU marine governance performance in four selected seas (Adriatic, Baltic, Celtic, and Mediterranean) and three national waters bordering Italy, Ireland, Slovenia, Croatia, Denmark, and Norway.

Part of the problem with the existing marine governance approach in the EU is its disjointed nature, with fragmentation observed between institutions, laws and regulations, as well as sectors. PERMAGOV aims to streamline the implementation of sustainable marine management by focusing on cross-cutting policy priorities in key areas of transport, energy, life and litter.

“Achieving the ‘blue’ dimension of the EU Green Deal will require innovative, multi-level and cross-sectoral governance approaches which break down long-standing institutional barriers and dependency on established paths, and which span multiple fronts and challenges that must be addressed to ensure the health of EU marine ecosystems, for example water pollution, overfishing, biodiversity loss, carbon emissions, energy production, shipping,” said Dr. Judith van Leeuwen, PERMAGOV’s coordinator and Associate Professor at Wageningen University.

In each of the nine cases (see figure), the existing governance structures will be analysed to gain a thorough understanding of institutional barriers and formal-informal dynamics causing fragmentation. The results will guide the co-development of multi-layered collaborative e-governance strategies with stakeholders across the priority areas.

“Ultimately, what we want to achieve with these strategies is to enhance the capabilities of stakeholders to effectively implement new and innovative governance strategies, including e-governance approaches, to support progress towards the Green Deal and wider international commitments like 30-by-30 agreed on at COP15,” concluded Dr. van Leeuwen.



“The ocean and seas are the main ‘lungs of the planet’ and essential to all life on it. Through PERMAGOV we hope to contribute to their conservation and sustainable use so they can continue to support humankind and all other life on the planet long into the future.”

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## Project fact sheet

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### Partners:

- Wageningen University, NL (coordinator)
- Aalborg University, DK
- UiT The Arctic University of Norway, NO
- Research Institute for Sustainability - Helmholtz Centre Potsdam, DE
- The Finnish Environment Institute, FI
- LifeWatch ERIC, ES
- Nordic Folkecenter for Renewable Energy, DK
- European Shippers Council, BE
- WWF Italia, IT
- Plan Bleu, FR
- The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission – Helsinki Commission, FI
- Arctic Energy Partners, NO
- The Queen’s University of Belfast, UK
- 21c Consultancy, UK
- Celtic Sea Power, UK

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