



ANNEX II: TERMS OF REFERENCE

Assistance to the Med Blue Economy Stakeholder Platform (MedBESP) - 28 - PRO663EAS-2026

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1. Partner country

N/A

1.2. Contracting Authority

The Secretariat of the Union of the Mediterranean (UfM).

1.3. General background

Through an integrated, cross-sectoral, interdisciplinary, and multi-stakeholder approach, the UfM facilitates the convergence of efforts at Mediterranean level to drive the blue and green transition forward; to circularize and decarbonize our sea-based economies; to protect and restore marine and coastal ecosystems; and to level the playing field, delivering on fairer, more resilient, and healthier livelihoods across the region.

On 17 November 2015, the Ministers of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) adopted the first **UfM Ministerial Declaration on Blue Economy** to strengthen the potential of the blue economy in the Mediterranean region through a maritime governance capable of providing the enabling conditions for jobs, innovation, and knowledge-based business opportunities in key Med maritime sectors.

To ensure appropriate governance structures, the **UfM Forum on Blue Economy** was established as a “...framework of dialogue on sustainable blue economy and cross-sectorial coordination of maritime policies...” and conceived as a dynamic process made of various elements, among which the **Med Blue Economy Stakeholder Platform (MedBESP)** <https://medblueeconomyplatform.org/> (previously called *Virtual Knowledge Center - VKC*), an on-line web portal to promote networking between countries and stakeholders on blue economy issues as well as linking to other blue economy related communities and stakeholders, with the purpose to promote the establishment and consolidation of a regional **blue economy community**. However, the purpose of the MedBESP is not only to facilitate links and dialogue but also to provide a space for: i) exchanges towards a strategic, integrated, and coordinated approach to relevant policies and actions impacting the Mediterranean Sea; ii) co-operation and synergy mechanisms/tools across blue economy sectors; iii) a common and coherent framework to exchange knowledge and build capacities in line with the specificities of the Mediterranean region.

The **2nd UfM Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy** was adopted by the 43 UfM member countries on February 2nd, 2021. The overarching objective of this ambitious Declaration is to reinforce the existing Euro-Mediterranean process on SBE, expanding the shared areas of cooperation, calling for new joint actions to speed up the post-Covid recovery, as well as to ensure the long-term sustainability of the sectors and activities of the Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean. The Declaration identifies the following priority areas of cooperation, addressing both key/strategic Med SBE sectors, as well as key enablers that can help to accelerate the Sustainable Development of those sectors:

- Governance and the future of sea basin strategies in the Mediterranean region
- Marine research and innovation, skills, careers, and employment
- Sustainable food from the sea: fisheries and aquaculture
- Sustainable, climate-neutral and zero-pollution maritime transport and ports



- Interactions between marine litter and the blue economy
- Coastal and maritime tourism
- Maritime Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Zone Management
- Marine renewable energies
- Maritime safety and security of blue economy activities
- Sustainable investments in the blue economy.

Providing the framework for its operationalization, the 2021 UfM Ministerial Declaration was further backed in 2022 by a clear and concrete implementation framework – a Roadmap – agreed by the UfM Co-Presidency, the UfM Secretariat, and the member countries of the UfM ([UfM SBE Roadmap – September 2025](#)). In line with the 2021 Ministerial Declaration and conceived as a regularly updated ‘live document’, the Roadmap provides an overview and analysis of the joint needs, gaps, and opportunities for future support, funding and implementation – to be launched and scaled-up from the short to the long term, for each of the ministerial priorities.

The 2021 UfM Ministerial Declaration on SBE and its related Roadmap provide a unique political, technical, and operational framework to enable cooperation, coordination, and the convergence of efforts towards the concrete and common joint priorities set by the 2021 Ministerial. Indeed, over the past decade, SBE has emerged as a driving force and accelerator for Sustainable Development / the blue and green transition across the Med region, bringing a wide range of environmental, social, and economic benefits to citizens and to ecosystems.

Moreover, the Mediterranean cooperation and partnership on SBE is by now a model and source of inspiration for other regions in the world. It has acted as a ‘glue’ across the region, providing fertile ground for connectivity and technical and political cooperation at all times, including throughout the current complex phase facing the region.

In this overall framework, the rich and dynamic community of Mediterranean Sustainable Blue Economy stakeholders is at the very heart of the UfM’s SBE dossier and of the implementation of the Ministerial and its Roadmap. Beyond animating the Mediterranean Blue Economy Stakeholder Platform (MedBESP), as a key user-led online hub and one-stop-shop, fostering the strong collaborative spirit of the Mediterranean SBE, the UfM also regularly gathers this vibrant Community **through dedicated Stakeholder Conferences**.

The latest iteration of this regular gathering ([2nd UfM Stakeholder Conference on SBE – Athens, 19-20 February 2024](#)) hosted by Greece, brought together in Athens over 350 participants in order to take stock of progress achieved; discuss joint challenges and transformative tools and pathways for the Sustainable Development of the sectors and activities of the Mediterranean SBE; feed the UfM SBE Roadmap and the related next steps; and set the path towards future deliberations at political level. A very rich and dynamic cross-section of Med SBE stakeholders from across the basin took part in the Conference, affirming the strong collaborative spirit of the Mediterranean cooperation on SBE, at both technical and political level.

Steps towards future political deliberations: Following the progress achieved on each of the 10 priorities of the 2021 UfM Ministerial Declaration on SBE, underpinned by the UfM Roadmap on SBE and its Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation mechanism, steps towards new political deliberations around a 3rd UfM Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy are moving forward. They will depend on the



regional context and circumstances.

- This process is and will continue to evolve, under the UfM EU and Jordan Co-Presidency, fully in line with recent key policy developments including the **Ocean and Med Pacts**.

Within both UfM Ministerials on SBE, the use of MedBESP as a ‘hub’/one-stop-shop for general, sectoral, and technical information and knowledge on the activities and sectors of the Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean, as well as an interactive and user-led multi-stakeholder platform is seen as an essential stakeholder consultation and engagement tool.

1.4. Relevant background

The first online version of the Med Blue Economy Stakeholder Platform was called Virtual Knowledge Centre and was officially launched in 2014 under the coordination of the European Union (DG MARE/EASME).

Since February 2017, the UfM Secretariat took over its management by moving the VKC database and files to a new server, and carrying out the first upgrades (e.g., set-up of a “latest news” and “calendar” section). In April 2017, an IT technical assistance was activated to ensure the long-term hosting, maintenance, improvement, and further development of the renamed VKC, nowadays called *Med Blue Economy Stakeholder Platform*. Since then, most of the functionalities of the MedBESP have been improved and developed, new sections have been added, and a significant amount of information/material has been uploaded in an organized and structured manner. It is worth highlighting the following, not exhaustive, list of improvements with respect to the previous version: i) a new registration process allowing users to upload “News”, “Events” and thematic web links directly themselves in any of the sections of the fully re-designed menu bar; ii) a monitoring system allowing the MedBESP administrators to assess both the overall functioning of the site and to focus on one or more specific elements (including regular extraction and analysis of google analytics); iii) improved usability/user experience through smart phones; iv) new two-level “searching” options (throughout the whole MedBESP or by thematic sections); v) a “carousel” option activated to showcase the most recent news/announcements; vi) links to UfM social media activated (X feed); vii) possibility to share any material uploaded in the MEDBESP through users’ social media; viii) information downloadable in Excel format; ix) a new section fully dedicated to the regular meetings of the UfM Regional Platform on SBE; x) a new section fully dedicated to the regular UfM Stakeholder Conferences on SBE; xi) an onboarding/user guide for new users; xii) the ability to centralize/host UfM SBE meeting registration forms; xiii) a messaging system allowing registered users to interact and exchange knowledge and information; xiv) An updated section on Funding Opportunities (funding programs, and open Calls) etc.

In short, by now MedBESP:

- Is the regional networking platform and one-stop-shop for sharing knowledge and supporting the development of the Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean. It is funded by the EU and overall managed by the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat (UfMS).
- Is an interactive, user-friendly, and community-based stakeholder platform. One of its key goals is to contribute to the development of the Mediterranean SBE Community.
- To this end, the platform enables registered users to keep track of the latest news and events in the region; share their work and initiatives in order to disseminate and widen the reach of their activities; extend their network; and build new operational partnerships.



Thus MedBESP acts as a valuable tool for capitalization, dissemination, and potential scaling-up to other parts of the region of successful and innovative SBE projects, programs, initiatives, and solutions.

2. BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVES, PURPOSE & EXPECTED RESULTS

2.1. Overall objective

The overall objective of the present assignment is to ensure that the MedBESP is maintained and strengthened as regional networking platform and one-stop-shop for sharing knowledge and supporting the development of the Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean, as well as valuable tool for capitalization, dissemination, and potential scaling-up of successful and innovative SBE projects, programs, initiatives, and solutions.

2.2. Purpose

Under the close supervision of the UFM Blue Economy team, the purpose of the present assignment is:

- To provide the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat (UfM) with the necessary IT expertise to maintain up and running, consolidate, further upgrade, and monitor the MedBESP;
- Ensure the technical management of MedBESP by consolidating and maintaining all existing functionalities and introducing new ones under the supervision of the UfM Blue Economy Team, where and as called for.
- Distill adequate content, including an updated video on SBE progress at Mediterranean level, and updates, including stronger links to other regional communities, such as Westmed, BlueMissionMed, Interreg Euro-med and Next-Med communities, SBEP, etc).

2.3. Results to be achieved

The below results are pursued through this assignment:

1. Technical Management & Consolidation:

- All functionalities and interactive processes (e.g., registration, uploading/downloading, etc.) are up and running, fast, and easily accessible.
- Existing/new thematic sections and sub-sections reliably host and open web-links, pdf documents, visual material, etc.

2. Further development:

- The overall system is flexible enough to easily implement changes in the design and content according to the instructions of the UfM Blue Economy Team.
- Higher level of interactivity between countries and users is achieved, in particular from the South/East Med (e.g., messaging functionality for direct exchanges among stakeholders, uploading of materials, etc.)
- Specific adjustments/actions are implemented with the ultimate aim of improving Stakeholder outreach through MedBESP.



3. Monitoring:

- Measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of data on web usage is clear and timely (i.e. google analytics).
- The overall MedBESP performance over the contractual period is clearly assessed and well proven, in particular with a view towards internal monitoring and reporting to donors and to stakeholders (i.e. UfM countries).

4. Content

- In close coordination with the UfM Secretariat, regular updating of the website's sustainable blue economy content/sections as indicated below.

3. ASSUMPTIONS & RISKS

- ✓ True engagement by countries and stakeholders in using the MedBESP.
- ✓ Close collaboration with the UfM Blue economy team.

4. SCOPE OF THE WORK

4.1. General

The assignment is subject to the awarding to the UfM Secretariat of the CINEA Action Grant on Sustainable Blue Economy.

The assignment, which consists of ensuring Med Blue Economy Platform's technical management, consolidation, further development, monitoring, and updating of content is expected to be carried out through the following list of activities:

○ Management & Consolidation:

- Produce a detailed inception report including the work plan, to be approved by the UfM Blue Economy Team, in order to take stock of the progress achieved in the development of the Med Blue Economy Platform and identify further potential.
- In close coordination with the SBE Team, further explore the development of MedBESP as a valuable strategic tool for capitalization, dissemination, and potential scaling-up of successful/innovative solutions to other parts of the region (SBE projects, programs, initiatives, solutions, etc.).
- Ensure the regular/constant updating of MedBESP with (inter alia) relevant news, events, reports, resources, training tools, etc. from the UfM and its partners (see 'further development and content' section below).
- Maximizing hosting potential: 'Host' as appropriate, the registration processes (registration forms) linked to certain events/meetings, through MedBESP (i.e., Regional Platform meetings and other relevant UfM events on sustainable blue economy including the regular UfM SBE Stakeholder Conferences). This shall (inter alia) aim at maximizing MedBESP as information and stakeholder hub in the framework of the regular UfM Stakeholder Conferences on SBE (before, during, and after the Conferences).
- Test biweekly the reliability of all functionalities added/upgraded.
- Ensure, or find solutions for, the smooth functioning of the dedicated server.
- Ensure accessibility to the MedBESP and subsections/windows from all major browsers and



- through smart phones.
- Provide overall backstopping when needed (e.g., respond users' questions, upload news/events provided by UfM Blue Economy Team and/or main Partners).
 - Build capacity to optimize the use of the MedBESP through calls, explanatory emails, and online sessions, if so requested by countries or stakeholders.
 - **Further development and content:**
 - Review/update and implement, as far as feasible, the already drafted Outreach strategy (See Annex, initially developed in 2020) with a focus in particular on developing MedBESP as a user-led/interactive platform. i.e.,
 - In line with the point above, support the relevant UfM Officer(s) in fostering/strengthening engagement; registration (i.e. as 'Initiative' for programmes, projects, and initiatives, or as a 'Stakeholder' for organisations and individual experts/consultants); and the uploading of content (both user-led and uploaded by the MedBESP team) by Med SBE Stakeholders and in particular by stakeholders based in the South and East of the Med. This will include support to the preparation of e-mailing campaigns/calls (i.e. using Mailchimp) to raise awareness on the Platform and drive new registrations.
 - As per the 2021 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy and potential future political deliberations on SBE, further the use of MedBESP to facilitate the exchange of relevant information including pedagogic tools, and to serve as an interface for mobility programs.
 - Under the close supervision of the SBE Team, continue updating as needed the relevant content sections of MedBESP (including: funding the blue economy, blue economy framework, training resources, content library and studies, etc.). This shall include the following sections:
 - 'About' and 'sustainable blue economy framework' drop-down menus (i.e: regular monitoring and updating of recent and relevant policy regional, EU, and international developments).
 - UfM SBE Regional Platform and Stakeholder Conference sections.
 - Funding opportunities section (Calls and Programs).
 - Mapping tool of research centers and universities.
 - Projects section: Those labelled by the UfM but also as spotlight for targeted/specific projects 'Associated' to the UfM SBE Roadmap.
 - Training resources: From an IT perspective, improved options/solutions for the hosting of learning and training materials shall be explored and proposed (i.e. so as to keep a repository of, i.e. already recorded webinars or workshops ideally directly hosted on MedBESP).
 - Regular monitoring and feeding the Platform with news, events, and publications (i.e. news items, carrousel, calendar tool, and 'blue economy library').
 - Support the relevant UfM Officer(s) in the preparation and dissemination of the 'SBE in the Med Newsflash/newsletter' produced and disseminated twice a year using MailChimp in EN, FR, and AR. This includes providing 0 draft in English based on content published on the platform and reaching out to key partners (i.e. UNEP/MAP, CPRM, MedWaves, PAP/RAC) to request their contributions to the newsletter.
 - Proactively propose up-to-date options to strengthen the technical performance of the systems, processes and equipment currently used to maintain and run MedBESP (i.e. IT hosting needs and capacity).



- Propose SEO (Search Engine Optimization) for optimal placement of MedBESP on search engines/chiefly google
- Increase inter-operability with other websites and inter-linkages with other communities and ensure the establishment of links with other relevant SBE stakeholder platforms at Med level (i.e., through mutual web-links/banners, guest articles, etc.)
- When technically viable and as called for/needed, add/modify sections, sub-sections and dedicated “windows” in the homepage as indicated by the UfM Blue Economy Team.
- Support MedBSP’s visibility on Social Media through the UfM’s social media channels, and through cross-posting by relevant institutional partners with the aim of (i.e.) raising platform visibility; driving new registrations; and promoting specific sections, aspects, or functionalities of the Platform.
- Produce an updated video on SBE progress at Mediterranean level, to be launched on a special occasion to be defined with the EU and Jordan UFM Co-Presidency on SBE (for example and if possible, on the occasion of a new Ministerial Declaration or high level event) and then ensure that the video is uploaded to MedBESP itself. The video should be in English and produced in 3 ‘versions’: English with ENG subtitles, ENG with French subtitles, and ENG with Arabic subtitles.
- **Monitoring:**
 - Under the supervision of the UfM Project Manager, follow up on agreed baseline “results” and “process” indicators.
 - Take part in regular coordination/project management online meetings with the relevant UfM SBE Team Members, called to discuss progress, corrective measures as needed, and next immediate steps.
 - Regular (at least monthly) monitoring and clean-up of the registered users database (stakeholder registry/Med SBE community of stakeholders).
 - Prepare regular progress Reports and, at least monthly, a detailed website’s usage statistics (regular monitoring of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs,)), namely through Google Analytics).
 - Stay alert for any possible security breach ensuring that all sections, sub-sections and dedicated “windows” are safe and accessible; Regular server check-ups to fix bugs if needed.
 - Monitoring of server disk space.
 - Ensure, in close coordination with the UfM SBE team, that the domain name is kept/secured/maintained and that appropriate web hosting services are maintained.

4.2. Project management

4.2.1. Responsible body

The project will be managed by UfM Water, Environment and Blue Economy (WEBE) Division.

All issues related to the technical elements in relation to this contract, mainly the specific activities as outlined in section 4.1. of these Terms of Reference, shall be taken by the project manager nominated by the contracting authority pursuant to special conditions of contract Article 2.1. The project manager will ensure these tasks in accordance with UfM internal rules and procedures.

5. LOGISTICS AND TIMING

5.1. Location

The assignment will be carried out at the premises of the UfM in Barcelona or remotely; under the



present contract, up to six travels to an EU or non-EU Mediterranean country may be charged, if so requested by the Management Authority (for a maximum duration of three days except if differently agreed with the UfM Manager of this contract).

Travel and accommodation expenses shall be covered by this global price assignment.

5.2. Commencement date & Period of implementation of tasks

The intended commencement date is 1st of July 2026 and the period of implementation of the contract shall be from contract start up to the 30th of April 2029. Please see Articles 19.1 and 19.2 of the special conditions for the actual start date and period of implementation.

6. REQUIREMENTS

Tenders deviating from the requirements or not covering all minimum requirements described below may be rejected on the basis of non-compliance with the tender specifications and will not be further evaluated.

6.1. Staff

Note that civil servants and other staff of the public administration, of the partner country or of international/regional organisations based in the country, shall only be approved to work as experts if well justified. The justification should be submitted with the tender and shall include information on the added value the expert will bring as well as proof that the expert is seconded or on personal leave.

6.1.1. Experts

These terms of reference contain the required experts' profiles. The tenderer shall submit CVs for the following experts:

The minimum requirements covered by the team of experts as a whole are detailed below:

IT

Qualifications and skills

- University degree in Computer Science or similar IT discipline
- Very good command (mandatory) of spoken and written English; good command of spoken and written Spanish, French or Arabic is a significant advantage

General professional experience

- At least, five (5) years of proven professional experience in designing, maintaining, developing, and monitoring complex multi-section and interactive web sites

Specific experience

- Experience in working in an international context
- Experience in working in at least two of the languages used in the Med Blue Economy Platform
- Knowledge of blue economy issues would be an important asset

Communication

Qualifications and skills

- University degree in Communication or equivalent



- Very good command (mandatory) of spoken and written English and French; good command of Spanish or Arabic would be a significant advantage

General professional experience

- At least, five (5) years of proven professional experience in communication in particular through interactive web sites

Specific experience

- Knowledge / previous experience on communication on Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean region would be an important asset
- Experience in working in an international context and specifically in the Mediterranean region
- Experience in working in at least two of the languages used in the Med Sustainable Blue Economy Stakeholder Platform
- Specific experience with websites and interactive communication tools

The Organisation and Methodology should demonstrate how the contract will comply with these requirements to accomplish the desired output(s). The Organisation and Methodology may include the name of an expert and his profile. Compliance (yes/no answer) of the team (as a whole) with the requirements will be checked, but there will be no marks given to the experts.

The Contractor may propose another combination of know-how and experience for carrying out the tasks required.

All experts must be independent and free from conflicts of interest in the responsibilities they take on.

6.2. Facilities to be provided by the Contractor

The Contractor shall ensure that the IT and communication experts are adequately supported and equipped. In particular, it shall ensure sufficient administrative and secretarial backstopping to enable him/her to concentrate on the main tasks. The Contractor must also ensure the transfer of funds to support IT expert activities under the contract and her/his payment on regular basis and in a timely fashion.

The Contractor will be responsible for:

- Provision of the expert(s) as per the present ToRs and, if necessary, replacement and support staff
- Technical, administrative, and financial backstopping
- Quality control and timely delivery of all outputs in line with the agreed work plan

Within the global price the Contractor has to cover:

- IT expert as well as technical, secretarial, and administrative backstopping costs
- IT expert equipment and transports costs (e.g., meetings at UfM premises)
- IT Travel costs when required as per the present ToRs (section 5.1)
- COMM expert as well as technical, secretarial, and administrative backstopping costs
- COMM expert equipment and transports costs (e.g., meetings at UfM premises)
- COMM expert Travel costs when required as per the present ToRs (section 5.1)



6.3. Equipment

No equipment is expected to be bought under this contract.

6.4. Incidental expenditure

This assignment is a global price contract.

7. REPORTS

7.1. Reporting requirements

The Contractor will submit the following reports and the payments will be associated as follows:

Deliverable	Description	Timing (as of the signature of the contract)
PHASE 1 (2026)		
Inception report	Twelve months management plan	Within two weeks from contract start
Progress Report 1	Quantitative and qualitative data to properly assess management plan implementation; activities foreseen for the following semester	6 Month (from contract start),
PHASE 2 (2027)		
Progress Report 2	Quantitative and qualitative data to properly assess management plan implementation; activities foreseen for the following semester	12 months (from contract start)
Interim Report	Detailed description of i) overall progresses made with respect to the previous phase; ii) users' traffic; iii) suggestions for improvement and sustainability; iv) other elements that might be considered relevant by the UfM Sustainable Blue Economy Team; activities foreseen for the following semester. Include all the annexes and outputs produced The interim report at the 18 month mark from contract start will also integrate/deliver the video on SBE progress at Mediterranean level delivered in 3 'versions': English with ENG subtitles, ENG with French subtitles, and ENG with Arabic subtitles	18 months (from contract start)
PHASE 3 (2028)		
Progress Report 3	Quantitative and qualitative data to properly assess the management plan implementation; activities foreseen for the following semester	24 months (from contract start)
Progress Report 4	Quantitative and qualitative data to properly assess management plan implementation; activities foreseen for the following semester	30 Month (from contract start)



PHASE 4 (2029)		
Final report	Detailed description of i) overall progresses made with respect to the previous phase; ii) users' traffic; iii) suggestions for improvement and sustainability; iv) other elements that might be considered relevant by the UfM Sustainable Blue Economy Team. Include all the annexes and outputs produced	One month before contract's end

7.2. Submission & approval of progress reports

The reports referred to above must be submitted in English to the Project Manager identified in the contract who will be responsible for their approval.