Cities and Regions for a Blue Economy

Towards a Resilient, Inclusive, Sustainable and Circular (RISC-proof) blue economy in cities and regions

What is the issue?

The blue economy is a driver for urban and regional development, especially in coastal, delta, fluvial and lacustrine cities that rely on marine and freshwater resources. However, coastal and inland cities and regions are increasingly exposed to the risks of too much, too little and too polluted water, threating economic activities, health and ecosystems. Recognising that economic resilience requires water resilience, Cities for a Blue Economy seeks to help cities and regions develop a **Resilient, Inclusive, Sustainable and Circular (RISC-proof)** blue economy at local level.

Value
USD 1.5 trillion/y
Conservative estimated value of the ocean economy

Too much
570
Low-lying coastal cities facing SLR of 0.5m by 2050, putting 800 million people at risk

Jobs
350 million
Jobs linked to the ocean

Too little
-12%
Potential reduction in a city's economic growth due to drought

Ecosystem services
1.5 x GDP
Value of services provided by biodiversity & ecosystems globally

Too polluted
75%
of cities see water pollution as a challenge

Why now?

2020
Green recovery from COVID-19

2030
UN SDG targets

2050
Net-zero GHG

Why cities, regions and basins?

► Blue economic activities (e.g. tourism, fisheries and blue biotechnology) **take place, create value and provide employment** at the local level.

► **Core city competences** such as land use planning, water and sanitation, and waste management **greatly affect the level of water security and quality**, which, in turn, affects the blue economy.

► **Water infrastructure investments at local level,** responding to local water risks, directly affect the ability of cities to carry out blue economic activities (e.g. nature-based solutions can limit urban flooding and allow groundwater restoration).

A RISC-proof blue economy in cities, regions and basins

RESILIENT
to shocks and risks exacerbated by climate change

INCLUSIVE
of local communities and stakeholders

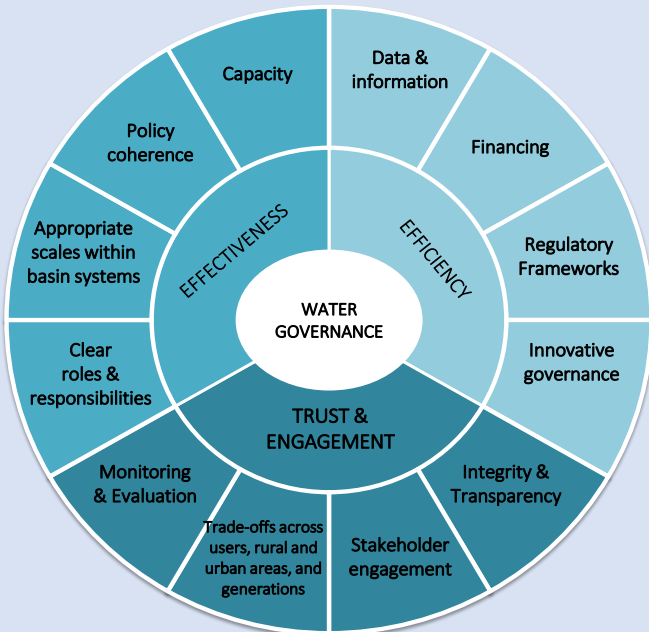**SUSTAINABLE**
environmentally, to preserve ecosystems

CIRCULAR
to use resources efficiently and reduce waste, including from plastics

How? Get water governance right!

Adopting a **RISC-proof** blue economy in cities and regions implies getting **water governance** right, at the **right scale**. This calls for a functional "city-basin" approach to water resources management.

OECD Principles on Water Governance

OECD (2015), *OECD Principles on Water Governance*, oe.cd/48w

Water governance at city-basin scale

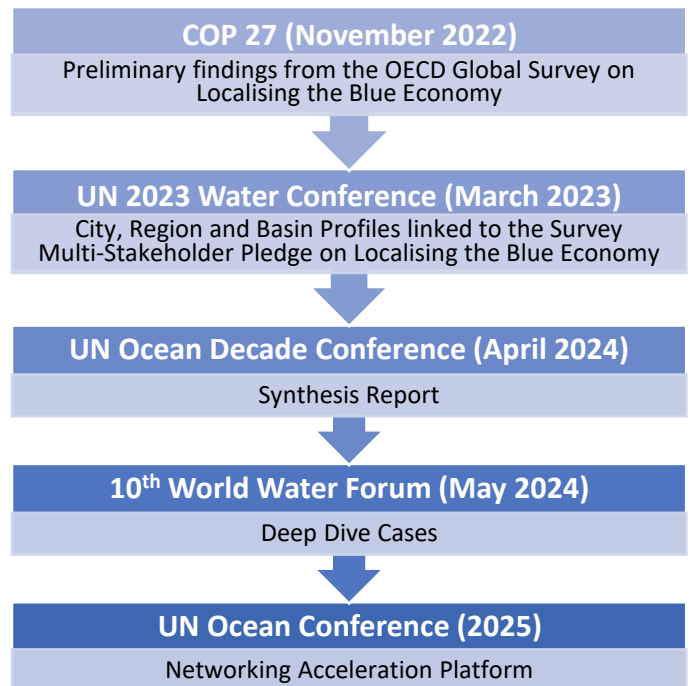OECD (2016), *Water Governance in Cities,* oe.cd/il/4ue

The project proposal

The **Cities and Regions for a Blue Economy** project will support cities, regions and basin authorities through:

LEARNING - Multi-level policy dialogues with cities, regions and basins to identify challenges and opportunities for the blue economy, applying the RISC-proof approach

SHARING - Peer-to-peer learning on best practice and lessons learned from international experience

MEASURING - Collecting and analysing data on the state of play and progress of cities, regions and basins towards the RISC-proof approach and good water governance

GUIDING - Defining and disseminating policy recommendations and action plans for RISC-proof blue economies in cities, regions and basins

Next steps

COP 27 (November 2022)
Preliminary findings from the OECD Global Survey on Localising the Blue Economy

UN 2023 Water Conference (March 2023)
City, Region and Basin Profiles linked to the Survey
Multi-Stakeholder Pledge on Localising the Blue Economy

UN Ocean Decade Conference (April 2024)
Synthesis Report

10th World Water Forum (May 2024)
Deep Dive Cases

UN Ocean Conference (2025)
Networking Acceleration Platform

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