

Title: BLUEQ Observatory launched to strengthen long-term protection of Adriatic-Ionian marine ecosystems

Subtitle: A new transnational network connects science, monitoring and marine management to support the long-term conservation of *Posidonia oceanica* and blue carbon ecosystems.

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A new transnational cooperation platform dedicated to the long-term monitoring, protection and sustainable management of marine ecosystems has been established within the BLUEQ project.

The BLUEQ Observatory brings together public authorities, marine protected area management bodies, research institutions, non-governmental organisations and other relevant stakeholders from across the Adriatic-Ionian region. Its establishment represents an important step towards ensuring that the knowledge, monitoring approaches and cooperation developed through BLUEQ continue beyond the lifetime of the project.

At the centre of this cooperation is one of the Mediterranean's most valuable marine ecosystems, the seagrass meadows *Posidonia oceanica*.

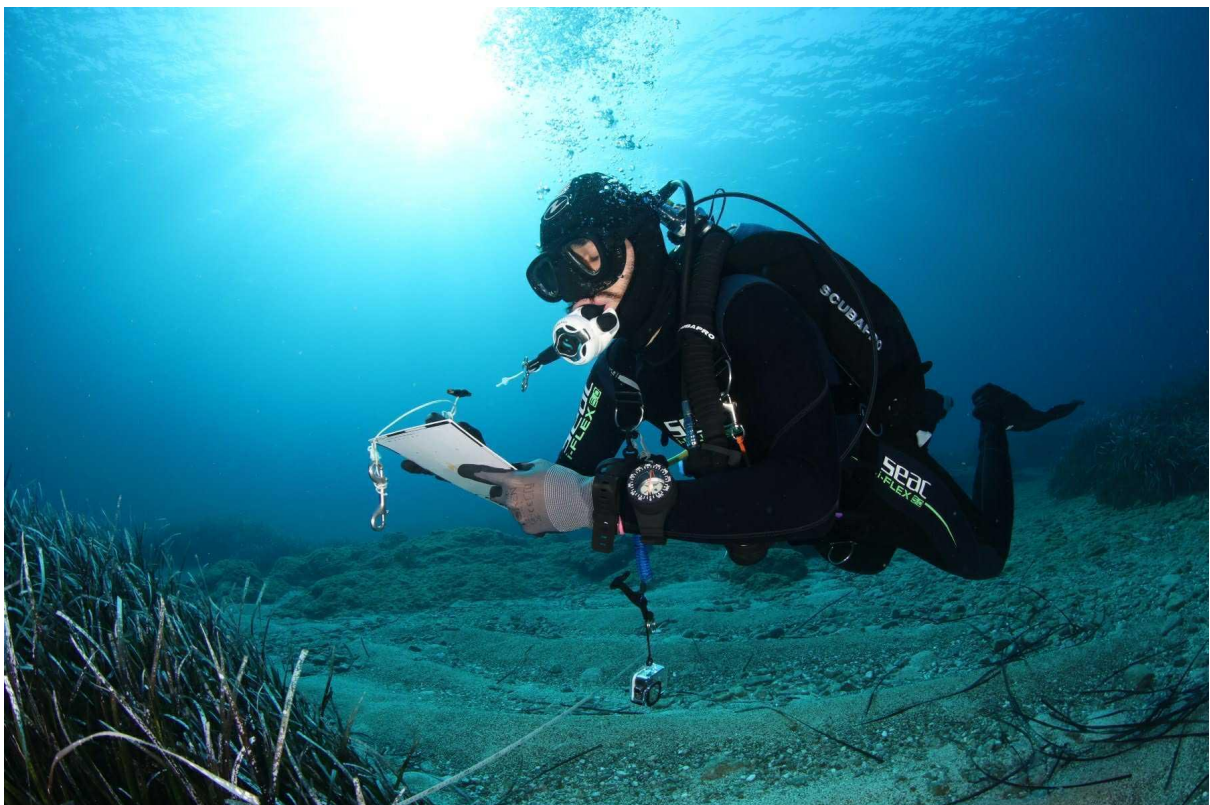


Figure 1 Underwater fieldwork in a Posidonia oceanica meadow within the BLUEQ project

T1. Safeguarding *Posidonia oceanica* and blue carbon ecosystems

The BLUEQ project – *Applied Solutions for Monitoring Coastal Habitats and Quantifying Blue Carbon Storage: An Integrated Approach for Sustainable Ecosystem Management* is co-funded by the European Union through the **Interreg IPA ADRION Programme 2021–2027**.

Led by the University of the Aegean, BLUEQ brings together partners from across the Adriatic-Ionian region to address shared challenges related to the monitoring, conservation and sustainable management of coastal and marine ecosystems.

The project focuses particularly on *Posidonia oceanica* meadows. These seagrass ecosystems play an essential role in the Mediterranean marine environment: they support rich marine biodiversity, provide nursery, feeding and shelter areas for numerous species, contribute to sediment stabilisation and water quality, and capture and store significant quantities of carbon over long periods.

Their role in carbon sequestration makes healthy seagrass meadows an important part of so-called **blue carbon ecosystems** - coastal and marine ecosystems capable of capturing and storing atmospheric carbon and therefore contributing to both biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation.

Despite their ecological and climate importance, effective conservation is still challenged by gaps in comparable and harmonised information on the distribution, ecological condition and carbon storage capacity of *Posidonia oceanica* meadows across the Adriatic-Ionian region.

BLUEQ addresses these gaps by bringing together scientific knowledge, innovative monitoring technologies and practical ecosystem management. Across the participating territories, the project combines different monitoring and assessment approaches, including satellite and drone imagery, in-situ and underwater mapping, biodiversity surveys, ecological assessments, sediment coring and biomass sampling.

Between October 2025 and July 2026, coordinated field campaigns were carried out in four study areas in Greece, Italy, Albania and Croatia, applying common methods across different marine environments. Early results from the analysed sites showed greater species richness and diversity within *Posidonia oceanica* meadows than on adjacent bare sediment. While this is consistent with the well-established ecological importance of seagrass habitats, the BLUEQ fieldwork provides comparable site-specific evidence that can be combined with the results of further laboratory analyses.

Laboratory work on the collected biomass and sediment samples will provide further information, including data needed to assess blue carbon storage. Together, the ecological, spatial and carbon-related results will help build a more complete picture of the multiple functions and value of *Posidonia oceanica* meadows across the project areas.

The resulting harmonised scientific evidence will contribute to an accessible GIS-based solution and support the development of a shared regional approach to the conservation and sustainable management of blue carbon ecosystems.

The project is co-funded by the European Union through the Interreg IPA ADRION programme.

Project: IPA-ADRION00447 – BLUEQ: Applied Solutions for Monitoring Coastal Habitats and Quantifying Blue Carbon Storage: An Integrated Approach for Sustainable Ecosystem Management.



Figure 2 Highlights from field campaigns across the four BLUEQ study areas in Greece, Italy, Albania and Croatia.

T2. From scientific knowledge to long-term cooperation

Generating scientific data is only one part of the challenge. Ensuring that this knowledge remains accessible and can be used by institutions responsible for marine conservation and management is equally important.

For this reason, the **BLUEQ Observatory** has been established as a permanent transnational cooperation structure within the Adriatic-Ionian area.

The Observatory is designed to support continuous monitoring and updating of information on the conservation status of *Posidonia oceanica* meadows and to connect the institutions and experts involved in their protection and management.

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Its membership brings together public authorities, marine protected area management bodies, research institutions, NGOs and other relevant organisations, combining scientific expertise with practical experience in marine and coastal management.

Through this network, the Observatory will serve as a hub for sharing scientific data, exchanging knowledge and experience, and supporting greater coordination of conservation approaches among participating countries.

The Observatory is also a central output of the **BLUEQ Joint Strategy**, providing a mechanism through which its principles and objectives can continue to be implemented over the longer term.

T3. A network designed to continue beyond the project

The operational framework of the BLUEQ Observatory is based on three interconnected components: institutional cooperation through a **Memorandum of Cooperation**, the **BLUEQ Digital HUB**, and regular communication through thematic **newsletters**.

The Memorandum of Cooperation formalises the commitment of participating organisations to the Observatory. By signing it, adopting institutions support the BLUEQ Joint Strategy and commit to contributing knowledge, data, expertise and other resources needed to maintain cooperation in the long term.

Across the participating countries, BLUEQ project partners have engaged relevant stakeholders to join the Observatory and support its long-term development. Through the signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation, these organisations formalise their commitment to the network and contribute to its continuity beyond the project lifetime.

Their involvement helps transform the cooperation established through BLUEQ into a lasting transnational network, where knowledge, data, expertise and practical experience can continue to be shared across the Adriatic-Ionian region.

The transnational character of the Observatory is particularly important because marine ecosystems and the pressures affecting them do not follow administrative or national borders. Comparable monitoring approaches, shared knowledge and regular cooperation between institutions can therefore provide a stronger basis for coordinated conservation across the Adriatic-Ionian region.

T4. Making BLUEQ knowledge accessible

A dedicated **BLUEQ Digital HUB** has been developed as the central online communication and knowledge-sharing space of the Observatory.

The Digital HUB provides access to key project results, monitoring tools, project data and examples of good practice, facilitating interaction among Observatory members and with external stakeholders.

It is complemented by thematic newsletters designed to maintain a continuous flow of information on BLUEQ activities, scientific results and pilot actions. Through these communication channels, the Observatory aims to reach not only researchers and institutions directly involved in the project, but also policymakers, protected area managers, other marine stakeholders and the wider public.

Stakeholders and organisations interested in marine habitat monitoring, *Posidonia oceanica* conservation and blue carbon are invited to **join the BLUEQ Observatory community through the Digital HUB**. By signing up, they can follow Observatory activities, receive project updates and newsletters, and stay connected with the wider BLUEQ community.

BLUEQ Observatory

A transnational cooperative community engaging authorities, researchers, and stakeholders to ensure continuity and long-term implementation of project outcomes.

Acts as a scientific reference point to support continued monitoring and management. The BLUEQ Observatory is a transnational platform dedicated to the preservation of seagrass ecosystems across the Adriatic-Ionian (ADRION) region. By bridging the gap between scientific research, institutional policy, and financial innovation, the Observatory serves as the permanent heart of cross-border cooperation for our marine environment.

Core Objectives

Standardized Monitoring: Harmonizing protocols across borders to ensure data consistency and reliable conservation assessments.

Knowledge Exchange: Facilitating the seamless sharing of data and technical expertise between ADRION coastal countries.

Financial Innovation: Identifying and developing financial incentives for Nature-based Solutions, linking ecological health to economic sustainability.

Strategic Governance: Serving as the foundation for the BLUEQ Joint Strategy, ensuring long-term policy impact.



Do you want to be part of Our Community

Sign up in the BLUEQ Observatory

Newsletters ▾

Figure 3 BLUEQ Observatory section of the Digital HUB, providing information about the Observatory and access to community registration and newsletters.

BLUEQ Digital HUB: <https://blueqdigitalhub.eu/index.html>

T5. Building a common basis for future marine protection

The establishment of the BLUEQ Observatory marks a transition from project-based cooperation towards a longer-term transnational network.

By bringing together monitoring results, scientific expertise, management experience and institutions from across the Adriatic-Ionian region, the Observatory is intended to help ensure that the knowledge generated by BLUEQ remains available and operational after the project ends.

In this way, BLUEQ seeks to create a lasting connection between **science, monitoring and marine management**, supporting better-informed decisions for the conservation of *Posidonia oceanica*, blue carbon ecosystems and the wider marine environment.

T6: About BLUEQ

BLUEQ (IPA-ADRION00447) stands for “Applied Solutions for Monitoring Coastal Habitats and Quantifying Blue Carbon Storage: An Integrated Approach for Sustainable Ecosystem Management”. The project is co-funded by the European Union under the Interreg IPA ADRION Programme 2021–2027 and supports a greener, more climate-resilient Adriatic–Ionian region.

T7: Further information

- Project website: <https://blueq.interreg-ipa-adrion.eu/>
- Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61573080822180>
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/blue-q-project>