Youth for Blue Economy Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Employment in Coastal Area

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Transnational report

Activity 2

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Table of Contents

1 Introduction

This document has been drafted for the project COAST – Youth for Blue Economy Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Employment in Coastal Area, 2023-3-FR02-KA210-YOU-000174337, which has been co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

This report[1] aims to offer a transnational perspective on key sectors of the Blue Economy in France, Italy, and Germany. It presents best practices for improving employability and entrepreneurial opportunities for young people with fewer opportunities, including NEETs, and identifies key skills relevant to them to enhance their employability in the maritime sector. Moreover, by providing an overview of the relevant sectors of the Blue Economy in the project countries, this report can serve as a guiding framework for youth social workers, educators, and other professionals involved in the education and support of the primary target group.

The main focus of this report is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the findings, highlighting differences and summarizing similarities in order to draw conclusions that are relevant to the European Blue Economy. The goal is to help advance educational offerings for young people across Europe.

Furthermore, the report aims to contribute to the social and economic inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities into the European society by enhancing their employability and identifying potential pathways for entrepreneurship. In doing so, it also supports the sustainable development of the Blue Economy.

[1] This transnational report was created based on country-specific reports provided by the project organisations participating in the COAST – Youth for Blue Economy Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Employment in Coastal Area, 2023-3-FR02-KA210-YOU-000174337 project. For more information related to the country-specific reports please contact the coordinator of the project: Maddy Thaon at Association Community; e-mail: maddy.thaon@community-asso.org.

1.1 Primary target group

The project primarily targets young people with fewer opportunities, such as NEETs[2]. Therefore, the country-specific reports on which this transnational report is based aimed to highlight activities and skills related to entrepreneurship within the Blue Economy that are particularly relevant to this target group.

In France, Italy, and Germany, the relevance of the Blue Economy for young people with fewer opportunities e.g. NEETs was widely acknowledged. This shared recognition ensures that the findings of this report offer meaningful insights and practical implications for improving the employability and entrepreneurial prospects of young people with fewer opportunities across Europe.

The relevance of the Blue Economy was particularly emphasized in France, especially in the Hauts-de-France region, which is characterized by high unemployment rates, notably among young people, with figures at times exceeding the national average of 25% (INSEE 2018). In this context, the Blue Economy offers a unique opportunity for social and economic revitalization. Young people with fewer opportunities or those living in isolated rural areas, such as the Audomarois, often face limited access to emerging or specialized employment opportunities. Their inclusion in Blue Economy sectors can help reduce social inequalities and foster a stronger sense of connection and belonging to their local communities.

In Germany, the ongoing shortage of skilled workers highlights the urgent need for effective strategies to support the integration of NEETs into the labour market. The country is not only experiencing a considerable lack of qualified professionals across multiple sectors but is also increasingly impacted by a shortage of assistant and support staff. According to an OECD (2022), approximately one in ten young people in Germany aged 18 to 24 is neither employed nor enrolled in education or training. This corresponds to around 9.7 percent, nearly 590,000 young individuals, a number that has even surpassed pre-pandemic levels.

This potential workforce is urgently needed by the labour market. Strengthening the employment prospects and entrepreneurial skills of young people with fewer

[2] The term “NEETs” (Not in Education, Employment or Training) refers young people between the ages of 18 and 29 who are neither in training, nor studying or working.

opportunities, such as NEETs, could help alleviate shortages of both skilled and assistant workers. Moreover, it could contribute to the creation of new businesses or the continuation of existing ones, which is particularly relevant in the maritime sector. Empowering NEETs through tailored support, accessible educational pathways, and the development of entrepreneurial competencies can unlock their potential and enable them to contribute meaningfully to the future of the labour market, the Blue Economy, and the resilience of local communities.

1.2 Methodology

In preparation for the country-specific reports on France, Italy, and Germany, the partner organisations carried out comprehensive research. The research for these reports followed a twofold approach: on the one hand, through extensive desk research to identify relevant data, academic articles, and key stakeholder networks; on the other hand, through field research in the form of interviews with experts to gain a deeper understanding of local conditions and needs.

More specifically, the online research included an in-depth analysis of online databases, specialised platforms, and academic literature to better understand the national and regional contexts of the Blue Economy and to map key stakeholders. To broaden insights and perspectives, this research was further enriched through the review of books, visual materials, and documentary sources such as explanatory videos and project reports. Following this approach, the project partners identified key stakeholders for interviews, including sector experts, professionals working within the Blue Economy, representatives of relevant organisations, and youth workers working with the primary target group. These interviews provided valuable insights into the specific needs and challenges faced by the project's primary target group. This method allowed for a structured and focused collection of information, ensuring a well-rounded and multidimensional perspective.

The findings from the research were compiled into country-specific reports. To present a consolidated and comprehensive overview, this transnational report was developed, synthesising the key results from France, Italy, and Germany into a single document.

2 The recognised common main sectors of the Blue Economy in France, Italy and Germany

Based on the country-specific reports, the main common sectors of the Blue Economy in France, Italy, and Germany include coastal tourism (including eco-tourism and coastal leisure activities), fisheries and aquaculture (including seafood processing), and renewable marine wind energy. These sectors play a central role in the economic and social development of coastal regions in each country and offer strong potential for employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, particularly for young people with fewer opportunities.

The following section summarises these common sectors and describes their country-specific characteristics. Furthermore, it highlights the employability and entrepreneurship opportunities each sector offers for young people.

2.1 Coastal tourism incl. eco-tourism and coastal leisure activities

Coastal tourism is a key sector of the Blue Economy in all three countries, especially in Italy. Italy benefits from its long coastline, cultural richness, and famous destinations like the Amalfi Coast and Venice. The sector is shifting from mass tourism towards more sustainable and innovative practices, encouraged by EU guidelines and programs like the Blue Flag certification. A notable example is the La Maddalena Archipelago National Park in Sardinia, where eco-tourism activities such as sailing, bird-watching, and traditional fishing promote both environmental protection and economic development. Digital tools are increasingly used to support sustainable visitor experiences.

The country specific report from France highlights the relevance of Eco-tourism as part of a strategy to sustainably enhance natural and cultural heritage. Regions like the Audomarois Marsh, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, illustrate this approach. Activities such as boat rides, water sports, educational cruises, and biodiversity-focused tours are offered in close cooperation between local businesses and environmental associations. These initiatives not only raise ecological awareness among visitors but also generate income for local communities. Moreover, eco-tourism creates

opportunities for youth entrepreneurship, for example, through participatory tourism projects where young people help manage and design tourist experiences in the marshlands.

In Germany, coastal tourism plays an important role in the Blue Economy, particularly along the country's 1,200 km coastline on the North and Baltic Seas. Regions such as Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (MV) are known for their vast water landscapes, national parks, and popular seaside destinations including the islands of Rügen, Usedom, Hiddensee, and Poel. The area attracts both domestic and international tourists with outdoor activities like hiking, cycling, and water sports.

Interview insights revealed a growing number of small businesses, particularly in water sports sectors such as surfing and sailing schools, often located even in smaller coastal villages. These businesses are increasingly supported by both tourists and local communities, which enhances their long-term sustainability. Such developments illustrate how coastal tourism can foster local entrepreneurship and strengthen regional economies while contributing to the Blue Economy.

The examples presented above underline the growing relevance of coastal tourism, as they not only contribute to regional economic development but also open up concrete pathways to employment and to entrepreneurship for young people. By offering opportunities for skills development in areas such as eco-tourism, water sports, and sustainable hospitality, coastal tourism can significantly enhance the employability of young people, especially those with fewer opportunities.

2.2 Sustainable fisheries and aquaculture incl. seafood processing

Italy is one of Europe's leading producers of seafood, with fisheries and aquaculture forming key pillars of its maritime economy. Sustainability is a priority, supported by EU policies and investments in traceability and resource protection. Sardinia stands out for combining traditional fishing techniques with innovative aquaculture practices such as algae farming and automated systems. Community cooperatives manage resources sustainably. To ensure the sustainability and future viability of the sector, educational programs and apprenticeships targeted at young people, especially those with fewer

opportunities, are being developed. These initiatives preserve traditional knowledge while equipping young people with modern skills for a sustainable Blue Economy.

In Germany, traditional coastal fisheries, such as those targeting herring and cod, along with sustainable aquaculture practices like macroalgae harvesting, mussel cultivation, and reed harvesting, play a vital economic role in coastal regions. According to the Government portal M-V (Ger. Regierungsportal M-V[3]), fish processing is among the most significant production areas, which remains a cornerstone of the local maritime economy. These sectors offer substantial employment opportunities, particularly in processing facilities, fish trade, and maritime research institutions. Fish processing plants in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern remain economically relevant, as they generate employment, support the local fishing industry, and contribute to international trade, all while adhering to principles of sustainability.

However, interviews conducted for the country-specific report reveal that traditional fishing is increasingly perceived as an unattractive career path by younger generations. For instance, a local vocational education and training (VET) center currently has only one apprentice training to become a fisherman, whereas in the past, entire classes were enrolled in this field. This shift reflects a broader trend, where many young people in Germany no longer consider fishing a viable or desirable profession.

In France, the fishing and seafood processing sector plays a central role in the economy of the Hauts-de-France region, particularly in and around Boulogne-sur-Mer. This port is not only France's leading fishing hub but also one of the most important centres for seafood in Europe. The local economy benefits from a wide range of activities, including artisanal and large-scale industrial fishing, as well as fish and seafood processing, packaging, and distribution.

Sustainable aquaculture in Hauts-de-France is expanding through innovative methods like aquaponics and closed-circuit farms, which reduce environmental impact and support biodiversity research. This sector offers practical, short-term training and job opportunities in breeding, system management, and distribution. It is especially attractive to environmentally conscious young people and fosters community involvement through local projects.

[3] Ernährungsindustrie - Regierungsportal M-V

Seafood processing companies are innovating in high-value products like ready meals and marine extracts for the pharmaceutical and cosmetic industries. The sector offers accessible jobs in handling, packaging, and logistics, often with training opportunities for disadvantaged youth. Initiatives like Capécure help integrate young people into the workforce while promoting sustainable marine practices.

In summary sustainable fisheries and aquaculture incl. seafood processing encompasses a range of employability options that generally do not require formal education or education qualifications. That makes this sector especially accessible to young people without formal educational qualification. These tasks include practical work in fishing, aquaculture, seafood processing, and seaweed farming, where skills can be gained through hands-on experience, internships, or apprenticeships. Consequently, this sector provides valuable entry points into the labour market, enabling NEETs and other disadvantaged youth to develop transferable skills, acquire work experience, and create pathways toward sustainable employment or entrepreneurship within the Blue Economy.

2.3 Marine renewable energy

Germany has a leader position in offshore wind energy, with 76% of jobs and 62% of gross value added (European Commission 2024: 20). In the early stages of development, marine energy projects primarily support jobs in research and development. As innovations prove viable, the sector advances into a second phase where the establishment of specialized SMEs generates additional employment opportunities in areas such as management, administration, and communication. In the scaling-up phase, the deployment of offshore energy infrastructure further drives job creation in financing, civil engineering, and long-term maintenance (ibid. 23). Numerous offshore wind farms are located in the German North Sea and Baltic Sea, supplying an increasingly significant share of the country's green electricity, and providing employment opportunities for young people with fewer chances.

In Italy, marine renewable energy is becoming a key pillar of Blue Economy, with offshore wind, wave, and tidal energy projects emerging in regions like Sicily, Apulia, Liguria, and Sardinia. National and EU policies support this growth, aiming to reduce

carbon emissions and diversify energy sources. Sardinia stands out as an innovation hub, trialing hybrid energy systems and investing in workforce development to train professionals in renewable energy. These efforts aim to boost sustainability while creating new employment opportunities and positioning Sardinia as a leader in green energy in the Mediterranean.

Renewable marine energies are a strategic focus in Hauts-de-France, with offshore wind projects like the Dunkirk wind farm driving regional efforts toward clean energy and economic growth. While tidal and hydropower remain experimental, renewable marine energies already offer job opportunities in technical roles such as turbine maintenance and offshore logistics. Specialized training and partnerships with institutions like the University of the Littoral Côte d'Opale help young people gain relevant skills and enter this expanding sector.

As a concluding remark of this sector, it can be added that marine renewable energy and the ongoing maintenance of offshore installations are significant drivers of job opportunities for NEETs. This finding was supported by both the desk research and the interviews. These job opportunities often require non or specialized yet accessible training and provide pathways into a rapidly growing and future-oriented sector. By engaging young people without formal qualifications in technical, operational, and support positions within marine renewable energy, the Blue Economy can foster greater social inclusion while addressing regional labour market needs and advancing sustainability goals.

2.4 Marine research and innovation

The sector "Marine Research and Innovation" was initially highlighted in the country-specific report from France. However, a cross-country comparison revealed that this sector holds relevance for all three partner countries. Given its role in supporting innovation, sustainable practices, and technological advancement across various Blue Economy areas, such as aquaculture, marine renewable energy, and coastal tourism, it has been recognised as a common and integral sector of the Blue Economy in all project countries.

For instance, research in marine biotechnology explores the use of algae to develop sustainable food products, dietary supplements, pharmaceuticals, and cosmetics. These innovations not only contribute to environmental sustainability but also open up new market opportunities, fostering entrepreneurship and creating employment prospects in coastal regions.

Marine innovation often leads to the development of new products and services, such as algae-based food supplements, biodegradable packaging, marine-inspired cosmetics, or sustainable fishing gear. NEETs can be supported to start small businesses or cooperatives around these innovations, especially with the help of incubation programs, mentoring, and access to micro-financing.

This sector may be particularly suitable for NEETs who have previously enrolled in related university programmes but did not complete their studies, interviews revealed that this group holds considerable potential for the labour market. Employers and entrepreneurs often value these young individuals for their intelligence and capabilities, recognizing their untapped talent despite non-traditional educational paths[4].

3 Non-common sectors of the Blue Economy

The following sectors of the Blue Economy were identified as relevant only within individual countries of the partnership.

3.1 Shipbuilding and maintenance

Italy's shipbuilding industry, known for luxury yachts and commercial vessels, is adopting green technologies to meet global sustainability standards. In Sardinia, the sector focuses on small and medium-sized boats, with shipyards and maintenance facilities integrating eco-friendly innovations. Ports like Cagliari and Olbia are modernizing to support this transition. Local educational institutions offer targeted

[4] The section describing the sector "Marine Research and Innovation" is based on the information provided in the country-specific report from France.

training in marine engineering and digital design, creating career opportunities for young people and strengthening the region's position in the maritime industry.

Germany ranks second in the European Union in the shipbuilding and repair sector, according to EU comparative data by subsector and Member State (EU Commission 2024: 29). According to Statista Research Department (2024), Germany is one of the most successful shipbuilding nations (measured by the weighted gross tonnage of ships delivered).

Ten years ago, it was already recognized that the German shipbuilding industry was facing demographic challenges, particularly due to an aging workforce (OECD 2016: 18). In response, many companies (such as the NVL Group[5]) began offering targeted vocational training and dual study programs such as ship construction, repair, and maritime engineering, specifically tailored to the demands and the needs of young people. These programs provide hands-on skills and offer long-term career prospects in fields such as ship construction, repair, and maritime engineering, with the aim of attracting and training the next generation of skilled workers.

In addition, the following sectors were identified only in the country-specific report from Germany.

3.2 Port activities and maritime transport

Traditional port activities include such as cargo handling, logistics and services for the shipping industry. They contribute to economic and trade development. In addition, ports support a wide range of industries, including shipbuilding, chemicals, food, construction, petroleum, power, steel, fish processing and automotive. These industries have ambitious goals for decarbonization and the transition to clean energy. Germany is the leader in the port sector, generating almost a quarter of gross value added (23%) and employing 21% of the workforce (European Commission 2024: 26). Ports play an important role not only in the handling of goods, but also as hubs for the energy transition, the gradual phase-out of fossil fuels such as gas and coal. Ports

[5] Training - NVL Services | NVL

generate demand for supporting services that NEETs could tap into through self-employment, such as: catering and mobile food services for port workers, small-scale repair or transport services, maritime recycling and waste management startups, services linked to sustainable tourism in port-adjacent areas.

3.3 Marine non-living resources

According to the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (Ger. Bundesamt für Naturschutz) (2024), in Germany, raw materials from the sea such as sand and gravel are mainly used in road construction and to produce concrete and mortar. Coastal protection also requires large quantities of sand to preserve vulnerable areas such as the Fischland-Darß-Zingst peninsula and the island of Sylt. Millions of tons are extracted annually from the sea, raising significant environmental concerns, as marine sand mining destroys habitats that may take decades to recover.

These activities create job opportunities across various sectors, including construction, environmental engineering, logistics, and coastal protection. For young people, particularly those without formal qualifications, the sector can offer accessible entry points through internship, vocational training and apprenticeships in areas such as heavy machinery operation, site maintenance, material transport, and environmental monitoring. Infrastructure and environmental projects, in particular, can provide NEETs with hands-on experience through internships or local employment programs, helping them transition into the labour market.

According to the interviews conducted in Germany, the sectors listed above are complemented by the following additional sectors:

3.4 Maritime fashion

The maritime fashion sector can be particularly appealing for young people with fewer opportunities, as it offers them the chance to create unique, handmade items. In interviews, starting a business in maritime clothing was described as resource-saving and relatively easy, especially for those who have sewing skills and access to a sewing

machine. Maritime fashion can include items such as dresses, hats, t-shirts, sweatshirts, or home accessories like decorations, candles filled with sand and shells, or woven seagrass bags and baskets. This sector not only makes creative use of coastal resources but can also contribute to their sustainable management.

3.5 Maritime art and furniture

The maritime arts and crafts sector offers low-threshold entrepreneurial opportunities by combining coastal materials with traditional craftsmanship. Young people with fewer resources can create decorative and functional items, such as shell ornaments or driftwood furniture, using sustainably sourced natural materials. This creative field requires minimal financial investment and supports skill development in design, craftsmanship, and basic business practices, making it a promising path for vocational integration and self-employment.

As concluding remark can be added that the sectors of the Blue Economy listed above can serve as a useful point of orientation, but they should by no means be considered exhaustive. Depending on the references used, these sectors may be categorized, named, or grouped differently.

Nonetheless, this chapter makes it clear that the Blue Economy offers a wide range of opportunities that can be highly relevant for young people without formal qualifications, whether through internships as a first step into working life, to gain experience and explore their skills, or through vocational training aimed at developing long-term career prospects.

4 Best practices

The main focus of this chapter is not to compare the recognised country-specific best practices, but rather to present a diverse range of examples that promote the Blue Economy, sustainability, and enhance the employability and entrepreneurship prospects of young people with fewer opportunities e.g. NEETs.

The best practices presented here illustrate a variety of career opportunities that offer either an entry point into the labour market or pathways for entrepreneurship. They highlight which initiatives, projects, or sectors have been identified as particularly suitable for the primary target group of this project.

In addition, these examples are intended to serve as inspiration, showing how the young people with fewer opportunities can be integrated into the world of work and how their potential can be harnessed. For a more detailed overview, the country-specific reports should be reviewed.

4.1 Best practices from France

- **Training in Sustainable Aquaculture and Seafood Processing**

Training in seafood processing is an initiative that is often established by local institutions such as professional maritime high schools, in partnership with aquaculture businesses and local cooperatives. These programs aim to address economic and ecological challenges by developing practical skills among young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities or far from employment opportunities.

- **Development of Eco-Tourism in the *Audomarois Marsh***

This initiative involves local associations, young entrepreneurs, and environmental organizations. The activities offered are designed to showcase natural resources while preserving them.

- **Marine Renewable Energy Internship Program**

Offshore wind farms in *Dunkirk* opens significant employment opportunities for young people in technical and innovative sectors. These programs are supported by partnerships between the *University of Littoral Côte d'Opale*, specialized companies, and training centres.

- **Community Aquaponics Project in Cambrai**

The aquaponics system established in *Cambrai* represents a true local innovation, combining two sustainable agricultural techniques: aquaculture and hydroponics. Aquaponics in *Cambrai* goes beyond simple production; it also represents a real economic opportunity for young people. By generating income through the sale of locally produced fish and vegetables, this project provides a sustainable revenue source for young entrepreneurs.

4.2 Best practices from Italy

- **Sustainable Maritime Spatial Planning**

This approach in Sardinia entails the strategic allocation of marine zones for various purposes such as tourism, fishing, renewable energy, and conservation. By assigning dedicated areas to specific activities, the island promotes sustainable coexistence of sectors while safeguarding marine resources and preserving biodiversity.

- **Investment in Eco-Friendly Technologies**

These systems combine fish farming with the cultivation of seaweed and mollusks, creating a symbiotic ecosystem that naturally balances nutrients in the water. Such projects in the *Gulf of Oristano* have not only boosted seafood production but also improved water quality, setting a standard for sustainable aquaculture in Europe.

- **Enhancing Port Infrastructure**

Upgrading port infrastructure has been a cornerstone of Sardinia's strategy to strengthen its Blue Economy. By supporting a wide range of activities, from cruise tourism to eco-certified fishing operations, Sardinia's ports serve as vital hubs for regional economic growth while adhering to sustainability principles.

- **Promoting Local Supply Chains and "Made in Sardinia" Initiatives**

Sardinia has prioritized the development of local supply chains to strengthen its regional economy while preserving cultural heritage. Programs like Made in Sardinia promote locally produced goods and services, particularly those tied to maritime industries.

4.3 Best practices from Germany

- **Sustainable Sea Farms**

These farms support eco-friendly food production, help conserve biodiversity, and advance innovative aquaculture methods. Many are also engaged in research, education, and partnerships with environmental organizations to encourage the sustainable use of marine resources. They offer employment opportunities across a wide skill spectrum, from unskilled jobs to specialized roles and research positions.

- **Locally sourced food**

Offering locally sourced food in restaurants promotes sustainability within the Blue Economy by minimizing emissions from long-distance transport and supporting environmentally responsible local fisheries and producers. This practice also stimulates demand for regional labour and skills in areas such as food preparation, hospitality, and sustainable sourcing.

- **Salt extraction**

Sustainable saltworks (salt production facilities using environmentally friendly methods) can support the Blue Economy by utilizing traditional, low-impact techniques that preserve coastal ecosystems and promote biodiversity, such as solar evaporation or manual harvesting in coastal salt marshes.

- **Sailing and surf schools**

In terms of social impact, sailing and surf schools can create low-threshold vocational opportunities for disadvantaged youth, especially those without formal qualifications. For example, some sailing schools are open to employing young individuals who hold a sailing license, regardless of whether they have completed a formal school. These young people can then work as instructors or even lead surf and sailing courses. They can gain soft skills, and they can experience that work can also be enjoyable.

5 Recognised skills for strengthening employability options and entrepreneurial skills of young people with fewer opportunities

By the review of the country-specific skills differences in the threshold levels of the identified competencies. These differences can likely be attributed to the varying compositions of the target groups with whom the participating organisations are working.

In the country-specific report from Germany, the identified competencies were primarily basic skills[6] that are generally relevant to entrepreneurship. In contrast, the country-specific report from France presented a more “mixed” skills profile, including both fundamental and specific competencies related to the Blue Economy. The country-specific report from Italy, on the other hand, focused exclusively on skills directly linked to employment and entrepreneurship within the Blue Economy.

[6] Basics skills for entrepreneurship were recognised for young people participating in pre-vocational training. To gain a better understanding on this topic, it is necessary to explain how vocational training and apprenticeships are organized in Germany. Germany has a dual vocational training system. Learners in vocational education and training (VET) attend a vocational school to gain theoretical knowledge related to their profession, while simultaneously working in a company to acquire practical skills. To be able to access this system, learners in Germany typically need to obtain a basic secondary school leaving certificate (Ger. *Berufsreife*). Those who do not hold this certificate must first catch up by participating in pre-vocational training programs, which help them obtain the required school certificate and prepare them to secure an apprenticeship position. In this pre-vocational program, which is coordinated by the Federal Employment Agency, young people in this program acquire the missing basic skills needed to access the VET system.

Therefore, the skills listed in this comparative report should not be seen as directly comparable but rather as a catalogue of various skills considered important for sustainable employment and entrepreneurial activities of young people with fewer opportunities e.g. NEETs in the Blue Economy. The country-specific contributions complement each other and highlight a wide range of skills that could match the diversity within the primary target group. This diversity in the threshold levels of skill can support the development of tailored training offers in entrepreneurship and employment in the Blue Economy.

5.1 Skill: Knowing one's strengths

The primary target group of the project particularly struggles with not knowing where their strengths lie or how they can make use of them. Therefore, personal skills and strengths were identified as a relevant skill when starting a business. When it comes to entrepreneurship is it crucial focusing on strengths.

5.2 Skill: Public speaking

Young people can be very shy when confronted with real people, therefore public speaking was identified as an essential skill.

This skill is important no matter how big or small the company is; it matters to investors, the public or target customers. Young entrepreneurs need to be able to effectively communicate the objectives to the audience, offer important insights into the business plan and its potential.

5.3 Skill: Identifying market for entrepreneurial purposes

Identifying market for entrepreneurial purposes is a fundamental aspect of entrepreneurship. Before starting a business or developing a new product or service, it is important to accurately determine the specific problem or market need that the business seeks to solve. This not only helps address unmet consumer needs and the

challenges facing potential customers but also attracts the attention of potential funders.

5.4 Skill: Writing a professional business plan

To apply for the start-up grant, founders must submit a professional business plan. Business plan refers to a comprehensive document that shows business opportunities with their risks and chances. The decisive factor here is the financial calculation with profitability and liquidity planning for at least 2 years. The business idea is examined by an expert and certifies whether it enables long-term success of self-employment. Therefore, all skills identified above come to light in the business plan.

5.5 Skill: Project management skills

Project management competence refers to the ability to effectively plan, coordinate, implement, and assess a project within a given timeframe and budget. It involves structuring tasks efficiently, managing human and financial resources, and ensuring that objectives are met. This skill set requires the ability to work collaboratively in a team, assign roles and responsibilities clearly, and adapt flexibly to unforeseen challenges. Furthermore, it includes evaluating project outcomes in order to refine and improve strategies for future initiatives.

5.6 Skill: Technical skills specific to blue economy professions

Jobs in the blue economy require specific technical skills that vary depending on the sector. In fishing, this includes handling fishing equipment, managing catches, and adhering to regulations on stock sustainability. In marine renewable energy, it involves the maintenance and installation of offshore infrastructure, such as wind turbines or tidal energy production devices. Skills in aquaculture involve managing breeding systems, feeding fish, and overseeing water quality.

5.7 Skill: Digital and technological skills

Digital skills are essential in the blue economy, particularly for managing maritime data, monitoring marine resources, conducting environmental analysis, and maintaining advanced technologies. This includes mastering digital tools used for marine mapping, fish stock management, climate condition simulation, and maintaining offshore infrastructures using remote tools. Additionally, the ability to use specialized software becomes an asset in sectors like marine renewable energies, maritime farming, or marine biodiversity management.

5.8 Skill: Communication and Awareness Skills

Communication and awareness include the ability to convey information clearly and persuasively, raise awareness among different stakeholders about environmental issues, and promote sustainable behaviours. In the blue economy, these skills can include the ability to raise public awareness about the protection of marine ecosystems, promote locally sourced marine products, or coordinate information campaigns on energy transition. They also encompass public relations management, writing communication materials (articles, brochures), and using social media to spread educational messages.

5.9 Skill: Marine Biology and Ecology

Marine biology and ecology form the scientific backbone of sustainable practices within the Blue Economy. These fields involve understanding marine ecosystems, from biodiversity patterns to the impacts of human activities. Skills in ecological monitoring, species identification, and habitat restoration are crucial for roles in conservation projects, marine-protected area management, and biodiversity surveys.

5.10 Skill: Engineering and technological skills

Engineering and technological skills are vital for expanding Sardinia’s capacity in marine renewable energy, aquaculture, and shipbuilding. Roles in this domain require

technical expertise in areas like offshore wind turbine installation, wave energy conversion systems, and digital ship design. Automation and robotics are also becoming integral to modern aquaculture, enabling efficient feeding and monitoring of marine species.

5.11 Skill: Eco-Tourism Management

Eco-tourism offers accessible entry points for young people, particularly in regions with rich cultural and natural heritage like Sardinia. Skills in eco-tourism management encompass planning sustainable travel experiences, managing natural attractions, and promoting local culture. This field emphasizes customer service, marketing, and an understanding of conservation principles to ensure tourism activities benefit both the environment and the local economy.

5.12 Skill: Shipbuilding and Maintenance

Shipbuilding and maintenance require a mix of traditional craftsmanship and modern technological expertise. Young people interested in this sector must learn skills such as hull fabrication, digital design, and propulsion system maintenance.

6 Conclusion

This transnational report summarizes the key findings of the country-specific report from France, Italy, and Germany. It explores how young people with fewer opportunities in coastal regions can be empowered to improve their integration into the labor market, open up career prospects, and promote sustainable entrepreneurship within the Blue Economy.

The findings presented in this report have been specifically selected with regard to the project's primary target group. NEETs, in particular, often do not follow standardized educational or professional pathways. The research for this report identified practical examples and sub-areas of the blue economy in which young people with unconventional educational backgrounds can also utilize and develop their potential.

Digital and technical skills, as well as related interests, play a particularly important role in this context.

This report may serve as a point of orientation for youth workers, educators, and other professionals outside the formal education system. Within the project, these professionals have been recognized as important intermediaries between young people and potential career paths, especially due to their key role in schools, youth centers, and other informal learning environments. These professionals are often closer to the young people than formal institutions and tend to focus less on grades or qualifications. Instead, they emphasize individual competencies and consider the specific life circumstances and trajectories of the youth they support.

Through targeted support of young people with fewer opportunities, this report contributes to strengthening coastal regions surrounding the project organizations, particularly in rural coastal areas. This is crucial to opening up employment opportunities in the Blue Economy for more young people, creating new jobs and securing existing ones. In doing so, young people can be encouraged to remain in their regions and develop viable long-term prospects locally. The thematic focus of the report opens up concrete opportunities and illustrates how young people can apply their individual skills within their home regions and actively shape their communities.

Furthermore, this report, as well as the underlying project, can be viewed in a broader context: beyond empowering young people and supporting coastal regions, it also contributes to the (further) development of innovation within the Blue Economy specifically, and within the broader economy in general, both in the project countries and across Europe. In this way, the report supports not only the expansion of Blue Economy sectors but also contributes to sustainable economic development overall.

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[7] The full list of references can be found in the respective country-specific reports.