

ALL-ATLANTIC OCEAN RESEARCH
AND INNOVATION ALLIANCE

#AAORIAForum25

From Enlightenment to Action
25-26 SEPTEMBER | BRUSSELS



2025 Intergenerational Dialogue Session

Summary of main proposals put forward by five groups of Early Career
Ocean Professionals (ECOPs)

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Introduction

The 2025 Intergenerational Dialogue Session was organized as an integral part of the All-Atlantic Ocean Research and Innovation Forum, held in Brussels, Belgium, in September 2025. The session was supported and co-organized by the OKEANO Coordination and Support Action (CSA) in close collaboration with Sigi Gruber.

The intergenerational dialogue aims to facilitate meaningful engagement of Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs) within the framework of the All-Atlantic Ocean Research and Innovation Alliance (AAORIA), fostering exchanges between generations and promoting mentorship and knowledge transfer with senior ocean professionals and policymakers. Most importantly, these sessions ensure that early-career voices and their innovative ideas are represented in ocean-related decision-making processes across AAORIA's priority areas.

By convening intergenerational dialogues at each All-Atlantic Forum, the Alliance seeks to strengthen the systematic engagement of ECOPs across the Atlantic community, support their contribution to ocean science diplomacy, and provide mentorship opportunities that extend from pole to pole and from coast to coast of the Atlantic Ocean. These sessions serve as conduits for ECOPs to broaden their networks, showcase their expertise, present actionable policy ideas, and contribute to a sustainable and equitable future for the Atlantic Ocean.

The main objectives of the 2025 session were to:

- **Facilitate intergenerational exchange:** Provide a platform for dialogue where leaders, policymakers, and practitioners—including ECOPs from diverse backgrounds and expertise—can share insights, challenges, and opportunities in addressing thematic priorities.
- **Promote collaboration:** Encourage cooperation among All-Atlantic countries and between generations of ocean professionals to address shared challenges and foster collective action in priority areas such as climate change resilience, ocean observation, and modelling.
- **Empower ECOPs as leaders:** Engage ECOPs in policy discussions and ensure their ideas and recommendations are taken forward under the framework of the Alliance, with continued support and mentorship from senior experts and policymakers.

In dialogue with and supported by their designated discussion coaches (10 in total) and five ECOP mentors from previous editions of the dialogue, 41 ECOPs developed five policy briefs proposing innovative solutions aligned with the All-Atlantic Declaration priorities. The concrete proposals put forward by the five groups are summarised below, while the full versions of all five policy briefs, as presented by the ECOP teams, can be found on the AAORIA website.

For more information and collaboration please contact [Lavinia Giulia Pomarico](#) (JPI Oceans, OKEANO CSA) and [Sigi Gruber](#) (Active Senior Advisor at the European Commission).

Summary of All-Atlantic Policy Briefs

1. Borderless Ocean Protection

Authors: Danielle Clair Seales (Sustainable Cayman, Cayman Islands), Jacqueline Maud-Hughes (Dept. for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), UK), Jonathan Heimer (Konsortium Deutsche Meeresforschung (KDM), Germany), Luciana Shigihara Lima (National Institute for Space Research, Brazil), Paloma Toscan (University of Minho (UMinho), Portugal), Paula Sacheus, (University of Namibia (UNAM), Namibia), Samkelisiwe Danisa (WILDTRUST, South Africa), Solomon Sebuliba (Alfred Wegener Institute, Germany, University of Balearic Islands, Spain), Theodoros Karpouzoglou (Marine and Freshwater Research Institute (MFRI), Iceland).

Coaches: Janice Trotte-Duha (Director, Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Oceânicas (INPO), Brazil), Peter Heffernan (Oceano Azul Foundation, Portugal)

Summary:

The High Seas—covering two-thirds of the global ocean beyond national jurisdiction—play a critical role in regulating climate, supporting biodiversity, and sustaining livelihoods. Yet they remain largely invisible to the public and underrepresented in education and policy. The entry into force of the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement in 2026 presents a historic opportunity to strengthen global ocean governance.

The Borderless Ocean Protection Initiative, proposed under AAORIA's framework, seeks to turn this opportunity into action by enhancing awareness, capacity, and implementation of the BBNJ Agreement. It combines education, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and community engagement to make High Seas governance accessible and inclusive. Through tailored learning tools, interdisciplinary curricula, and collaborative outreach—from classrooms to coastal communities—the initiative aims to bridge the gap between science, society, and policy. By fostering a shared understanding of the High Seas and their value, Borderless Ocean Protection would strengthen cooperation across the Atlantic, empower new generations of ocean leaders, and advance the UN Ocean Decade Challenge 10 on capacity development, in line with AAORIA's Priority C on ocean governance and stewardship. Through Borderless Ocean Protection, AAORIA would position itself as a leading platform for inclusive ocean governance and education, turning the commitments of the BBNJ Agreement into shared action for a more connected, informed, and sustainable Atlantic Ocean community.

Recommendations:

- Establishing Borderless Ocean Protection as a flagship All-Atlantic initiative supporting BBNJ Agreement education, outreach, and implementation.
- Integrating High Seas governance into formal and informal education systems, ensuring accessibility and inclusiveness across regions and languages.
- Creating a network of ECOP BBNJ Ambassadors to facilitate knowledge exchange, mentorship, and intergenerational dialogue on High Seas policy and practice.
- Supporting participatory, community-driven initiatives—such as exhibitions, workshops, and media campaigns—that link local experiences to the global ocean governance agenda.
- Encouraging collaboration between governments, academia, and civil society to co-create actionable pathways for BBNJ implementation and ensure broad-based awareness of its benefits.

2. All-Atlantic Knowledge Hub

Authors: Mathew K. Avarachen (Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway), Youssef Fannassi (Ibn Tofail University, Morocco), Ben Hunter (Marine Institute, Ireland), Laura Leiva (Helmholtz-Institute for Functional Marine Biodiversity, Germany), Uriel Mendoza (National Autonomous University of Mexico, Mexico), Zara Sanya Prew (University of Cape Town and South African Environmental Observation Network, South Africa), Kardiattou Samba Sall (Research Institute for Development, Senegal), Emer Shovlin (Marine Institute, Ireland), Susanna Huneide Thorbjørnsen (Institute of Marine Research, Norway). **Coaches:** Sheila Heymans (European Marine Board, Belgium), Godwell Nhamo (University of South Africa, South Africa), Martin Zimmer (Leibniz-Centre for Tropical Marine Research, Germany)

Summary:

Across the Atlantic, coastal communities are increasingly affected by climate change, erosion, pollution, and biodiversity loss, threatening local ecosystems, economies, and cultural identities. While large amounts of quantitative scientific data exist, these alone cannot fully capture how societies adapt to environmental change. Qualitative knowledge, including local, traditional, and Indigenous narratives, offers valuable insights into resilience and stewardship but often remains undocumented or excluded from decision-making.

To address this imbalance, the All-Atlantic Knowledge Hub is proposed as a co-designed, open-access platform that integrates quantitative data (e.g. monitoring, satellite observations, ocean models) with qualitative knowledge (e.g. local narratives, practices, folklore). Building on the existing All-Atlantic Coastal Resilience Knowledge Hub, this initiative seeks to translate both data types into accessible, actionable information, strengthening adaptive management and evidence-based policy across coastal regions.

Aligned with AAORIA's Priority B on ecosystem protection and resilience, the Hub contributes to the UN Ocean Decade Challenge 9 and complements EU initiatives such as the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the Water Resilience Initiative, and the Ocean Pact, by adding a crucial socio-cultural dimension to existing data systems.

Recommendations:

- Expand the existing Coastal Resilience Knowledge Hub to include qualitative and community-based knowledge.
- Develop an inclusive, open-access digital platform for integration and co-creation of knowledge.
- Ensure equitable data sharing and fair financial compensation for community participation.
- Preserve and disseminate Indigenous and local knowledge in line with Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles.
- Link quantitative and qualitative knowledge to inform culturally appropriate protection, monitoring, adaptation, and restoration strategies.

3. Connecting the Disconnected: Building a network for Atlantic fisheries & aquaculture

Authors: Alexandre Cottier Pérez (International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), Denmark), Grace Levins (Konsortium Deutsche Meeresforschung (KDM)/University of Galway, USA), Ianna Luna (Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Canary Islands), Ilyias El Medhoun (PGPR Technologies, Morocco), Jovana Kornicer (Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat (APCFNC), Canada), Jaylene Mbararia (International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), Denmark), Menahil Fatima (International Master of Science in Marine Biological Resources (IMBRSea), Pakistan), Maria Galveia (JPI Oceans, Belgium)

Coaches: Trevor Swerdfager (University of Waterloo, Canada), Florence Coroner (Institut Français de Recherche pour l'Exploitation de la Mer (IFREMER), France)

Summary:

Small-scale fishers, aquaculturists, and Indigenous and island communities across the Atlantic play a vital role in sustaining livelihoods, food systems, and cultural identity. Yet, they often remain excluded from decision-making on marine resource management and policy. This disconnect undermines equity, sustainability, and the long-term resilience of Atlantic coastal societies.

The Atlantic Fisheries and Aquaculture Network (AFAN) proposes a collaborative platform under the AAORIA framework to bridge this gap. By linking small-scale actors, researchers, industry, and policymakers, AFAN would foster inclusive, sustainable, and economically resilient fisheries and aquaculture across the Atlantic.

Building on existing structures such as the Small-Scale Fisheries Hub (SSF Hub) and AAORIA's coordination mechanisms, AFAN would provide an accessible online space for dialogue, knowledge exchange, and innovation. Its features would include an interactive map of regional initiatives, a stakeholder forum, a mentorship and innovation programme, and policy toolkits outlining best practices for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture. Beyond sharing information, the network would strengthen collaboration, resource access, and policy advocacy, ensuring that community voices directly inform marine governance.

By embedding AFAN within AAORIA, the initiative would secure long-term stability and align with global objectives, notably the UN Ocean Decade Challenges 3, 4, 6, 9, and 10, on sustainable blue food, resilient communities, and capacity development. Through inclusive participation, AFAN would enhance cooperation, empower coastal communities, and promote equitable and sustainable ocean economies across the Atlantic.

Recommendations:

- Embed the AFAN within AAORIA's structure to benefit from its funding, coordination, and long-term operational support, ensuring continuity and visibility.
- Collaborate with existing networks and organisations, such as the Small-Scale Fisheries Hub (SSF Hub), Low Impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE), and Indigenous organisations like the Aboriginal Aquatic Resource and Oceans Management (AAROM) bodies, to avoid duplication and build on established trust.
- Establish an advocacy node within AFAN to connect community knowledge and priorities to regional, national, and international policymaking processes, including engagement with bodies such as FAO, ICES, and relevant Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs).

4. Advancing Cooperation and Sustainability for a Permanent Atlantic Ocean Observation Strategy

Authors: Afroosa Malik (National Oceanography Centre, UK), Alina Blume (European Commission DG RTD, Belgium), Divine Worlanyo Hotor (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) - Water Research Institute, Ghana), Emily Johnson (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), USA), Gwenn Taburet (Institut Français de Recherche pour l'Exploitation de la Mer (IFREMER), France), Johanna Klein (Institut Français de Recherche pour l'Exploitation de la Mer (IFREMER), France), Lena Buth (Alfred Wegener Institute, Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research (AWI), Germany), Victoria Wegner (German Marine Research Consortium (KDM), Leibniz Centre for Marine Tropical Ecology (ZMT), Germany). **Coaches:** Craig McLean (CMOceans, LLC, USA), Lucie Cocquempot (Institut Français de Recherche pour l'Exploitation de la Mer (IFREMER), France)

Summary:

Despite decades of progress, Atlantic Ocean observation remains fragmented, short-term, and unevenly supported. While a wealth of data, platforms, and technologies exists, the absence of a unified strategy limits the effective use of ocean knowledge for policy and action. These challenges are compounded by geopolitical pressures, funding uncertainty, and persistent under-observation in the South and Equatorial Atlantic — regions vital for climate regulation and biodiversity.

Building on the AtlantOS project and the emerging EU Ocean Observation Initiative (OOI) under the EU Ocean Pact, this policy brief proposes a Unified Atlantic Ocean Observation Strategy under the AAORIA framework. The strategy would align existing systems, enhance inclusivity, and secure long-term sustainability through collaborative, intergenerational, and basin-wide governance. Anchored in Communities of Practice (CoPs) and aligned with the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS), the initiative would foster interoperability, sustained funding, and equitable data access. Integrating scientific, societal, and local priorities, it would strengthen evidence-based policy, climate resilience, biodiversity protection, and hazard preparedness.

Through AAORIA's collaborative structure and experience in coordination, the Atlantic community is well positioned to transform observation into a lasting, inclusive system. This approach supports UN Ocean Decade Challenges 7, 9, and 10, advancing global cooperation, knowledge transfer, and capacity development for sustainable ocean management.

Recommendations

- Establish a unified Atlantic Ocean observation strategy under AAORIA, building on AtlantOS and aligned with GOOS principles to ensure coordination, interoperability, and sustainability.
- Expand and balance observation capacities across the South and Equatorial Atlantic through new Communities of Practice, stronger collaboration with partners in Africa, the Caribbean, and South America, and long-term joint EU-partner funding.
- Integrate and scale AtlantOS deliverables (EOVs, OBP) within AAORIA structures and Digital Twins of the Ocean to strengthen data sharing and accessibility.
- Connect observation efforts to fisheries management, storm forecasting, and coastal adaptation to enhance community resilience and societal benefits.
- Foster intergenerational leadership and cooperation through an AAORIA hub for ECOPs and recurring Atlantic-wide forums uniting funders, users, and data providers.

2. AAORIA Hackathon Series

Authors: Kianna Bear-Hetherington (Wolastoqey Nation in New Brunswick, Canada), Lawrence Dogli (Gulf of Guinea Maritime Institute, Ghana), Veronica Dossah (DOTCAN Institute, Canada), Nahuel Nicolas Herz (KU Leuven, Belgium), Mee-Ya Monneedy (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), USA), Nadezhda Sokolova (Alfred Wegner Institute (AWI), Germany), Deborah Prado (University of Waterloo, Canada, Federal University of Sao Paulo, Brazil). **Coaches:** Diego Galeano (Secretariat for Innovation, Science and Technology, Argentina), Luis Pinheiro (CESAM, University of Aveiro, Portugal)

Summary

The AAORIA Hackathon Series is proposed as an innovative mechanism to strengthen collaboration between science, policy, and society across the Atlantic. Hackathons are short, collaborative events (typically 24–48 hours) where participants from diverse backgrounds including scientists, policymakers, entrepreneurs, and community representatives co-design and prototype practical solutions to pressing ocean challenges. Adapted from successful models such as UNESCO's Ocean Decade and the EU Blue Economy Hackathons, this approach can accelerate problem-solving while reducing the costs and barriers associated with traditional innovation and consulting processes.

In the AAORIA context, hackathons would address challenges linked to ocean governance, the blue economy, and coastal resilience, with the flexibility to scale from local to transatlantic levels. They would foster inclusive participation across languages, cultures, and regions; promote interdisciplinary collaboration among science, policy, and business actors; and ensure impactful outcomes through follow-up mechanisms that guide promising ideas toward implementation. A pilot hackathon in Brazil, proposed to coincide with the next AAORIA Forum, would serve as a testing ground to refine the format, focusing on locally relevant issues such as marine conservation, sustainable fisheries, or community resilience. Insights from this pilot would inform a broader transatlantic framework for recurring hackathons under AAORIA, creating a sustained pipeline for innovative, community-driven, and policy-relevant solutions.

Implementation would be coordinated through the AAORIA Secretariat, with logistical and communication support from OKEANO. Funding should combine public, private, and philanthropic contributions to ensure long-term sustainability. Success will be measured by the diversity of participants, adoption of hackathon-generated solutions, and evidence of enhanced collaboration and ocean literacy across sectors and regions.

Recommendations

- Launch a pilot hackathon in Brazil to test and refine the format for broader application.
- Ensure inclusive participation through multilingual and accessible engagement formats.
- Embed interdisciplinarity and measurable impact in hackathon design and outcomes.
- Develop partnerships with the public and private sectors to co-fund and sustain the series.
- Establish follow-up mechanisms to support the implementation of promising solutions.

Conclusion

Together, the five ECOP-led policy briefs present a suite of tangible, innovative, and actionable solutions to key challenges facing the Atlantic Ocean — from strengthening governance of the High Seas and integrating diverse knowledge systems, to enhancing sustainable fisheries, advancing ocean observation, and promoting collaborative innovation through hackathons.

These proposals align closely with the priorities of AAORIA and offer concrete pathways to advance its shared objectives on ocean governance, resilience, and inclusion. By integrating these ideas into ongoing and future AAORIA activities, the Alliance can further strengthen its role as a platform for co-creation, science diplomacy, and evidence-based policymaking across the Atlantic basin.

Importantly, the 2025 Intergenerational Dialogue has demonstrated that such collaborative intergenerational approaches not only enrich the Alliance's policy and content agendas, but can also serve as a cornerstone of the AAORIA Intergenerational Programme, ensuring that early-career voices remain central to shaping the future of Atlantic cooperation.



Intergenerational Dialogue 2025 participants and organizers, AAORIA Forum, Brussels, Belgium.
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