



JUNE 2022 | DIESIS ARTICLES SERIE

# SOME INSIGHTS OF THE BLUE SOCIAL ECONOMY: THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL ENTERPRISES



This article is written by Francesco De Rosa, Senior Expert at Diesis Network.

**“Transforming the EU's Blue Economy for a Sustainable Future”,** the new Communication of the EU Commission empowers the Blue economy as pivotal for the green transitions. **Social Economy organizations and Social Enterprises** play a significant role in the development of Blue economy models. They are active in almost all “Blue” economic compartments: renewable energies, tourism, fishery, fish stocks, plastic sea pollution management, education, and so on, looking at how they can use social innovations to solve some of the ocean's many problems like **Overfishing; Marine litter and plastic sea pollution Unsustainable aquaculture; Marine Engineering and Oil Drilling; Skills and qualifications gaps.**

**Social Enterprises are contributing to tackling those issues with innovative solutions taking into account both, social and environmental performances in the Blue economy.**

A good example is the **“Litter Spain”** project led by AIMPLAST – Instituto Tecnológico del Plástico, which answers the plastic pollution management by combining circular economy and social inclusion. In the village of Concello de Outes, on the Atlantic coast of Galicia, a former local school has been turned into a new marine litter transformation centre assigned to three associations for people with disabilities. The associations frequently organize beach clean-ups, and the collected litter, through the equipment installed in the former school, is upcycled into new items, for use by the fishing sector (i.e. local shellfish gatherers) designed by women from the fisheries sector and purchased by local fisheries organisations, providing revenue for the social associations and their members.



SOURCE: EC.EUROPA.EU



Another interesting solution is the “**Net-Works**” aroused by the cooperation between **Interface**, a global carpet tile manufacturer and the **Zoological Society of London**, an international conservation charity. They are working in a fragile coral reef area in the Philippines, where the fishing community collect discarded fishing nets and recycle them into carpets. The project incentivizes communities to organise beach clean-ups, giving discarded fishing nets a value while generating funds for local communities and making a positive difference in their livelihood.



SOURCE: NET-WORKS.COM

Enaleia in Greece is a Social Enterprise started in 2016 as the first professional fishing school in Greece. They offer jobs to unemployed young people and teach them about sustainable fisheries and fishing tourism. Enaleia is currently dedicated in collaboration with Healthy Seas, to the “Mediterranean Clean-Up” project a wide-scale cleanup of marine plastic in the Mediterranean region in collaboration with professional fishermen. The marine plastic collected by fishermen and the used fishing equipment is recycled and upcycled.



SOURCE: ENALEIA.COM

An outstanding example is **Horcynus Orca Foundation**. A cluster that brings together 19 institutional, scientific research, socially and environmentally responsible entrepreneurs and Social Economy organizations with the mission of enhancing the area of the Strait of Messina. Today the foundation carries out research in the environmental and marine fields, is a pole of Mediterranean cultures and is a centre for scientific dissemination. One of its activities is extracting energy from sea currents using a vertical axis turbine, the Kobold turbine, which was designed to best meet environmental protection and efficiency constraints and minimise construction and maintenance costs.



SOURCE: HORCYNUSORCA.IT

Plastic Whale is the first professional plastic fishing company in the world and it is a social enterprise whose mission is to make the world's waters plastic-free, creating value from plastic waste, they are based in Amsterdam and fishes on Amsterdam canals. Plastic Whale was born five years ago with a challenge: build a boat made with plastic waste, today the social enterprise has 6 boats, and designs objects made with recycled plastic from Amsterdam canals. The boats are used for plastic fishing in the Amsterdam canals and at the port of Rotterdam. As of today 35.000 bottles and 560 plastic bags have been fished.



SOURCE PLASTICWHALE.COM