



## “Blue Rivers and Lakes” Award

<p>Context</p>	<p>In the framework of the <a href="#">EU Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030”</a>, the EU funded project <a href="#">BlueMissionMed</a>, in collaboration with the <b>European Commission (EC)</b>, announces the “<b>Blue Rivers and Lakes</b>” Award to celebrate the initiatives to protect and restore small/medium scale basins and therefore contributing to the Mission’s objectives.</p> <p>The EU Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030” aims to eliminate pollution and make the blue economy carbon-neutral and circular. The Mission supports regional engagement and cooperation through area-based "Lighthouses" in major sea/river basins. Mission Lighthouses are sites to pilot, demonstrate, develop and deploy the Mission activities across EU seas and river basins.</p> <p>The award represents an opportunity to witness the commitments of the EU basins community of actors towards the Mission and to present the actions and initiatives which contribute to the Mission Ocean’s objectives.</p> <p>The purpose of this award is to highlights projects where impactful interventions can be more directly observed and replicated in smaller, more localized aquatic systems.</p>	
<p>Organiser</p>	<p>BlueMissionMed CSA</p>	<p><a href="#">Website</a></p>
<p>The award: categories and prizes</p>	<p>In collaboration with the European Commission</p> <p>The “Blue Rivers and Lakes” will award 3 actions <b>engaging local rivers and lakes communities in protecting Ocean and Waters in the following three categories:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Category 1: small/medium rivers/lakes - <b>Governance</b></li> <li>• Category 2: small/medium rivers/lakes - <b>Innovation</b></li> <li>• Category 3: small/medium rivers/lakes - <b>Restoration</b></li> </ul> <p>Thanks to the <a href="#">endorsement of the Mission Charter</a>, the winning good practices (one per category) will benefit from the following opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Access to the <b>Mission Implementation Platform services</b>, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge resources and a portfolio of relevant projects.</li> <li>• Information and guidance on accessing additional funding opportunities.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support through Help Desks offering:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of science and transition roadmaps.</li> <li>• Skills training for impactful and sustainable implementation.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Participation in a dynamic <b>networking environment</b>, fostering connections and the exchange of best practices with key stakeholders.</li> <li>- Visibility and recognition, including:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Video interviews and promotion through BlueMissionMed and the EU Mission “Ocean and Waters” communication channels as best practices in protecting and restoring small/medium scale basins.</li> <li>o Widespread dissemination of the shortlisted submissions through BlueMissionMed’s website and project channels.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>The award ceremony will take place during the <b>EU Ocean and Waters Days</b> in Brussels, between <b>March 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup></b>, providing winners with an opportunity to showcase their initiatives on an international stage.</p>
<p>How to participate?</p>	<p>To compete for the award, participants should represent an organisation (public authority, NGO, private companies, research institutes, schools, etc) whose proposed <b>activity is implemented in the EU basins</b> (Mediterranean Sea/Atlantic-Arctic/Baltic-North Sea/Danube-Black Sea basins). Only applications submitted using the official form will be considered. The application form is available at the following <a href="#">link</a>. Please follow the instructions for preparing the requested presentation, using the <a href="#">provided template</a> as a guide.</p>
<p>Important dates</p>	<p>The award will be launched on December 18, 2024.</p> <p>The deadline for the submission of the actions is January 29, 2025.</p> <p>The 3 winners will be notified by February 12, 2025, and the confirmation of the presence to the Award Ceremony should be communicated by email to the organisers by February 14, 2025.</p> <p>The Award Ceremony will be held in Brussels (Belgium) in March 2025, between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>. Please check the BlueMissionMed website for the final confirmed date.</p>
<p>Eligibility criteria</p>	<p>1) Submitted actions must <b>have endorsed or submitted the application to endorse the <a href="#">Mission Charter</a> before the deadline (January 29, 2025)</b>. In the application to the Mission Charter, it should be clear how the action contributes to the Mission Ocean objectives, goals and two enablers (if possible). Proof of endorsement of the Mission Charter (i.e. compiled submission form) must be uploaded in the Google form in the specific section.</p>

2) Submitted actions are **required to contribute to one or more of the objectives of the Mission Ocean and Waters**. Addressing more than one Mission objectives is an added value for the evaluation of the proposed action. The three objectives of the Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030 are:

- I. Protect and restore marine and freshwater ecosystems and biodiversity, in line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030
- II. Prevent and eliminate pollution of our ocean, seas and waters, in line with the EU Action Plan Towards Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil
- III. Make the sustainable blue economy carbon-neutral and circular, in line with the proposed European Climate Law and the holistic vision enshrined in the Sustainable Blue Economy Strategy.

3) This award is specifically designed to recognize and support **initiatives targeting small to medium-sized catchments**. Larger river systems, such as the Danube and similar-scale rivers, are not within the scope of this call, neither tributaries of larger rivers are eligible. For lakes, eligibility is determined by size. Lakes exceeding [size threshold, small: <1km<sup>2</sup>, medium: 1–100km<sup>2</sup>,] will not be considered for this award. The focus is on smaller lake systems that demonstrate a tangible connection to the surrounding ecosystem and local community efforts.

3) Applicants can **submit their actions to all categories through different applications** (one application per category).

4) **Single citizens are not eligible for the award.**

5) All Countries and third Parties eligible for Horizon Europe are eligible to this award ([link](#)).

6) To avoid conflicts of interest, partners' group or units directly involved in the BlueMissionMed project are not eligible for this award.

7) This award does not recognize individual projects but rather **entities that demonstrate sustained and concrete actions** with a proven commitment to long-term implementation. While the proposed action may include activities funded by a specific project, eligibility extends beyond the scope of a single initiative. Applicants must provide evidence of a **strategy** that ensures the continuity and scalability of their actions, showcasing their ability to address challenges in small or medium-sized rivers, catchments, or lakes over time. The emphasis is on the entity's capacity to deliver lasting impact through consistent and strategic efforts.

Evaluation  
criteria

The submitted actions will be evaluated by a jury consisting of one or more external experts and members of the BlueMissionMed Consortium, based on the following criteria:

**Category 1: Governance**

**Objective:** This category recognizes initiatives that showcase effective and inclusive governance models for small and medium-sized rivers and lakes. The focus is on actions that engage local communities, foster multi-stakeholder collaboration, and promote sustainable decision-making processes.

**What we expect:**

- Transparent and participatory management practices.
- Collaboration among public authorities, NGOs, private entities, and local communities.
- Implementation of policies or frameworks that contribute to long-term sustainability and resilience of the aquatic ecosystems.
- Demonstrated impact in reducing conflicts over resource use or enhancing community stewardship.

**Category 2: Innovation**

**Objective:** This category celebrates innovative solutions that address challenges in the management, preservation, or enhancement of small and medium-sized rivers and lakes. Innovation may be technological, methodological, or related to new practices.

**What we expect:**

- Cutting-edge technologies, tools, or methodologies that improve water quality, biodiversity, or ecosystem services.
- Scalable and replicable solutions that can inspire similar initiatives in other regions.
- Integration of digital tools, AI, or nature-based solutions to tackle pollution, climate impacts, or biodiversity loss.
- Demonstrated effectiveness in overcoming specific challenges, supported by measurable results.

**Category 3: Restoration**

**Objective:** This category highlights actions aimed at restoring small and medium-sized rivers and lakes to a healthier state. The focus is



on initiatives that actively rehabilitate degraded ecosystems and enhance their functionality.

**What we expect:**

- Restoration projects that address habitat degradation, species loss, or ecosystem fragmentation.
- Actions that reintroduce native species, stabilize riverbanks, or improve hydrological flows of water and sediments in line with the Source-to-Sea concept, a key element of the recent EU Nature Restoration Regulation.
- Community-driven restoration efforts that integrate traditional knowledge with scientific approaches.
- Demonstrated success in reversing damage and achieving ecological balance, supported by visible outcomes.

**General Impacts Expected Across Categories:**

- Enhanced community involvement and stewardship of aquatic ecosystems.
- Contributions to the EU Mission objectives of zero pollution, biodiversity preservation, and climate resilience.
- Scalable and replicable models for regional and international impact.
- Strengthened networks among stakeholders to promote continued collaboration.

Award Ceremony	The Award will be conferred in the context of the <b>EU Ocean and Waters week in Brussels (Belgium), between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of March</b> (please check the BlueMissionMed website for the final confirmed date). The winners will be invited to the Award Ceremony and their travel and accommodation expenses (one person per category) will be covered by the organisers.
Contacts	For further information, please contact: <a href="mailto:info@bluemissionmed.eu">info@bluemissionmed.eu</a>