

PREP4BLUE Pilot Action Gathering Report

April 10-11, 2025

Institut de Ciències del Mar (ICM-CSIC), Barcelona, Spain

As part of the Preparing the Research & Innovation Core for Mission Ocean, Seas & Waters (PREP4BLUE) Horizon Europe project, the Institut de Ciències del Mar (ICM-CSIC) hosted a two-day gathering in Barcelona for five pilot actions selected in 2024 through the project's citizen engagement funding scheme. These pilot actions aim to engage diverse publics in restoring the ocean and waters through creative, inclusive, and participatory methods. The gathering was designed to foster mutual learning, peer exchange, and explore pathways for future collaboration aligned with the goals of the Mission Ocean & Waters. The two-day event combined formal presentations, collective discussion, local immersion, and facilitated co-creation activities, generating both interpersonal connections and conceptual outputs.

The five participating projects and related people were:

- Jade Zoghbi and Ladislav Chachignot, Giant collaborative puzzle, Blue Genes Community
- Nicole Loeser, Sustainable Coastal Futures, Institute for Art and Innovation (IFAI)
- Michal Lovecky, Us: The Sea of Sounds, Go360 s.r.o.
- Sophia Laarissa Mantilla, Ocean Literacy for Blue Citizenship Training Course, Early Career Ocean Professional (ECOP)
- Sandra Lund, 2024 Challenge – DigiEDUHack, Social Innovation Actions

Day 1

The first day, held at Centre de la Platja, opened with team presentations facilitated by Ifigeneia. Each pilot shared their project scope, methods, and future aspirations, followed by a Q&A and open discussion that revealed key cross-cutting values: emotional connection to the ocean, arts-based engagement, co-creation, and the importance of equitable and inclusive processes.

The afternoon session featured a funding strategy session led by Elena Torrecilla Ribalta, from Grants Management Unit of the Institut de Ciències del Mar (ICM-CSIC). Elena introduced the EU funding landscape for 2025–2026, highlighting specific Horizon Europe Mission Ocean calls relevant to the pilot actions, including those on coastal regeneration, citizen science, and blue economy innovation.

Later, participants took part in a walking ethnography of the Barceloneta neighbourhood, organized by Taller d'Història de la Barceloneta. The tour included a visit to the Torre del Relotge (originally one of the first lighthouses in the Mediterranean, the Torre del Relotge later became a landmark clock tower

overlooking the fishing dock of Barcelona) and the Fishermen's Guild, where participants engaged in dialogue with local actors, learning about the cultural and socio-ecological significance of the area. This grounding experience connected local community knowledge with the broader themes of marine stewardship and citizen engagement.

Day 2

The second day, hosted at the ICM building, was dedicated to facilitated co-creation, led by Aua Plaza (Colectivo Posidonia). Participants explored synergies between their approaches and envisioned a future shared initiative through interactive exercises, mapping, and group dialogue.

Summarising, the three key aims of the second day were:

- Deepening group cohesion and team building.
- Exploring the common ground for future collaborations and better understanding the basis, key values or guidelines for them.
- Exploring synergies and possible future projects in collaboration as a team and between individuals.

We began with a brief introduction to the agenda and participants, followed by a space to collectively “harvest” some of the powerful ideas and guiding values that had surfaced during Day 1.

These included:

- Experiencing the ocean with the senses; “connecting with the blue” as a metaphor and a practice.
- Bridging science and art, and connecting to the broader web of life.
- Cross-sectoral, interdisciplinary, and intergenerational collaboration.
- Promoting blue literacy through accessible, creative formats.
- Working collaboratively to build community and shared ownership.
- Grounding all action in values such as justice, inclusivity, diversity, and equity.
- Fostering impact through education, communication, and community engagement.
- A possible contribution to the upcoming **DigiEDUHack 2025**, with coordination led by Sandra Lund and supported by other participants.

You can find a visual summary of these values in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Harvest from day 1 – Key ideas and guiding.

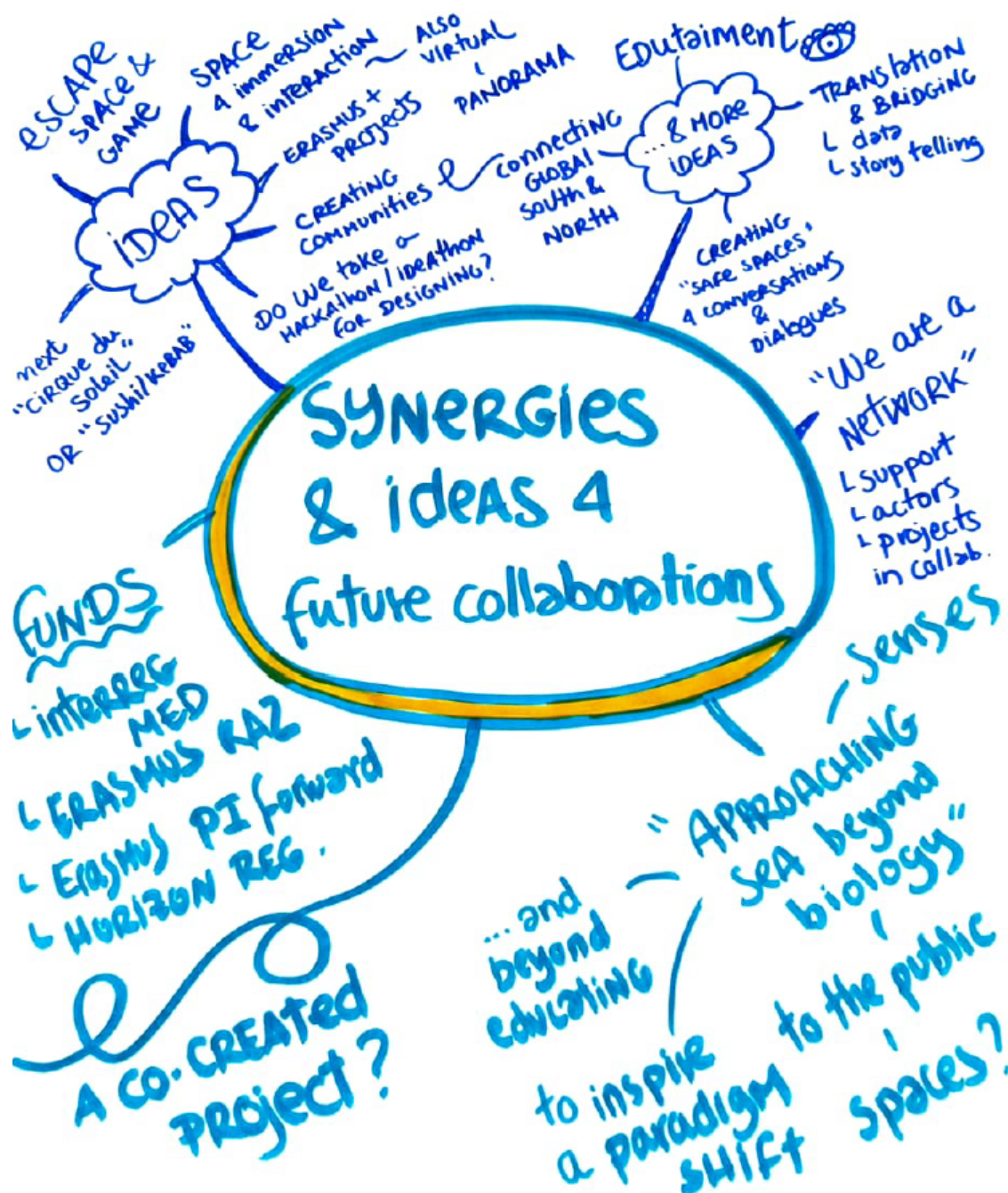


Figure 2: Synergies and ideas for future collaborations.

Following this reflection, we opened a facilitated conversation designed to raise collective intelligence around the question: “Which possible synergies and future collaborations among us —projects, actions, alliances— can we imagine?”

In the first round, participants began brainstorming freely. In the second and third rounds, ideas were cross-pollinated and began to gain shape, allowing more concrete and creative visions to emerge. These are visually represented in Figure 2.

The lower part of Figure 2 (in turquoise) shows the ideas related to the potential structure and approach of a shared project, such as co-created frameworks and possible funding sources. In the top section (in navy blue), there are the first concrete project ideas and links between them.

After a short break, we returned to the space with a more focused question: “Which concrete co-created project or collaborations do we want to establish or materialise?”

This led to a dynamic working session in which a first collective draft of an emerging co-created project took form (Figure 3). The project, tentatively titled “Connect the Blue”, is rooted on a narrative and structure that can be adapted across locations and contexts. Its key elements include:

- A narrative thread (“blue wire” or “*fil bleu*”) that symbolically and practically connects local activities under a shared identity.
- Activities that are locally adaptable, possibly integrating community knowledge, and based on the strengths of the team (e.g. immersive VR, games or escape rooms, sensory art-science actions, youth work, marine life storytelling).
- A collaborative frame, supported by this group, that defines the vision and values while remaining flexible for local adaptation.
- The idea of a platform to connect the team and potentially engage wider audiences.
- The mention of citizens assemblies as a participatory format worth exploring.

The top part of Figure 3 shows the next steps and roles that were defined collectively to move the initiative forward. These were further synthesized in Figure 4, which visually connects the project outline and the team’s emerging roadmap using —what else? — a blue wire.

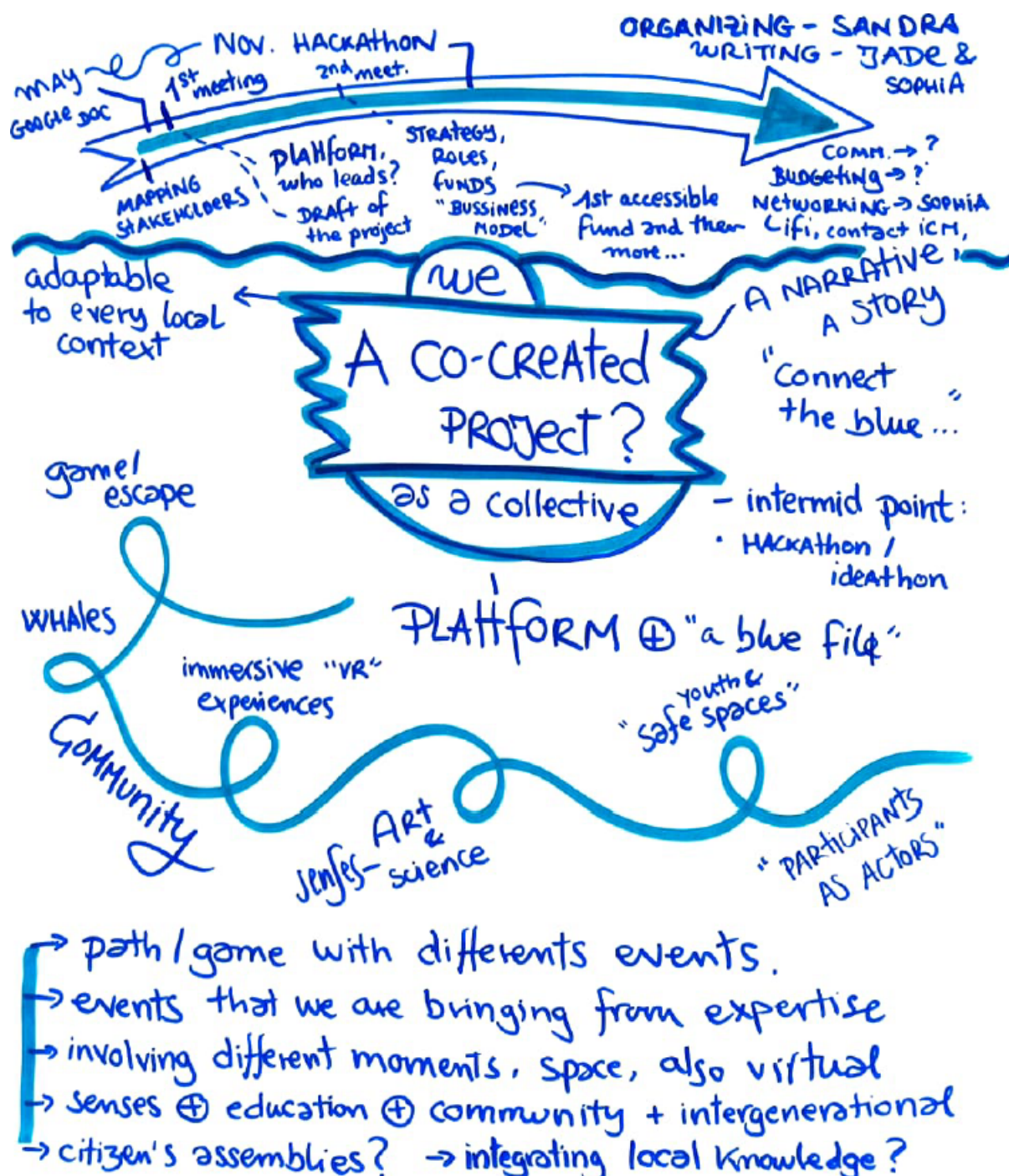


Figure 3: Materializing as a team a collective and co-created project + Next steps.

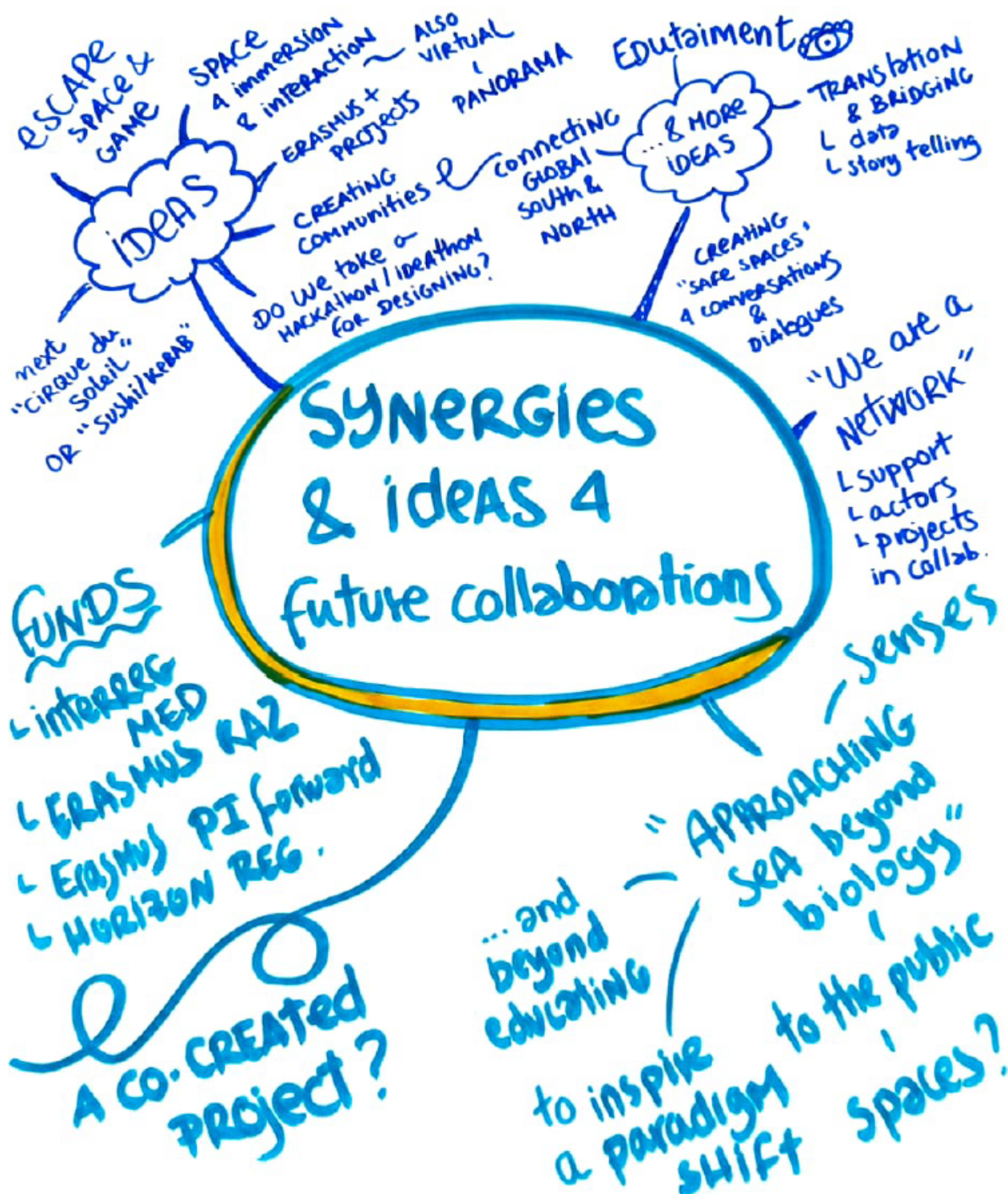


Figure 4: Overview "Connect the blue (wire)".

Overall Conclusions

Over the course of two days, the PREP4BLUE Pilot Actions gathering created a space where artists, educators, curators, scientists and researchers came together not just to present their work, but to connect, reflect collectively, and dream forward.

What began as a series of individual citizen engagement projects quickly unfolded into something more connected: a constellation of aligned intentions, shared values, and mutual curiosity.

Across storytelling, immersive experiences, education, and participatory design, participants discovered a common commitment to making the ocean felt, not just understood.

One of the clearest takeaways was the energy for collaboration. The co-creation sessions did not only surface ideas, they built momentum.

From this space emerged the early outline of a collective initiative tentatively called “Connect the Blue”, a modular and adaptable framework that could evolve into something larger.

Among the concrete steps proposed was a joint application to DigiEduHack 2025, as a first opportunity to co-create in practice and bring wider visibility to this emerging alliance.

What made this gathering remarkable was the atmosphere: generous, reflective, energising. Participants did not only share: they listened, offered support, and asked honest questions.

ANNEXES

Annex I – Event Agenda

Day 1/2  Centre de la Platja ([map](#))

 April 10, 2025

Morning – at Centre de la Platja

09:30 – 10:00 | Welcome Coffee

Refreshments and informal reception

10:00 – 10:15 | Opening & Context

Welcome words + event objectives - *Speaker: Ifigeneia Giannoukakou-Leontsini*

10:15 – 10:45 | Icebreaker Activity

Facilitated by: Sophia Laarissa

10:45 – 12:30 | Pilot Action Presentations

5 teams × ~10 mins each + 10 mins Q&A

Who you are, what you're doing, pilot action presentation

12:30 – 12:45 | Break!

12:45 – 13:30 | Feedback & Discussion

Open space to reflect, connect themes, and identify synergies

13:30 – 15:00 | Lunch (catering)

Day 1/2  Centre de la Platja ([map](#))

 April 10, 2025

Afternoon – EU Mobility & Walking Tour

15:00 – 15:20 | Best Practices in EU Funding Opportunities

Tips & strategies from the ICM's Grants Management Unit

Speaker: Elena Torrecilla Ribalta

15:20 – 15:35 | Open Discussion with the Grants Team

Q&A and reflections on funding opportunities

16:00 – 18:00 | Barceloneta's Maritime Memory Walk

Walking ethnography

Led by *Taller d'Història de la Barceloneta*

20:00 (approx.) | Group Dinner @ [L'Òstia de la Barceloneta](#)

Day 2/2 📍 Institut de Ciències del Mar ([map](#))

 17 11 April, 2025

Morning – at ICM-CSIC

09:00 – 09:30 | Morning Coffee

09:30 – 13:00 | Collective Futures Session (*Facilitated by Miguel Angel “Aua” Plaza*)

A three-part, flowing session to:

- Reflect on shared values and ways of working together
- Co-create ideas for future actions and alliances
- Wrap up with key takeaways, insights, and what's next

13:00 – 13:30 | Closing Circle

Final thoughts and thank-yous

Annex II - Photo Highlights

Below are selected photo highlights from the PREP4BLUE Pilot Actions gathering. These images capture moments from the presentations, co-creation sessions, the ethnographic walk through Barceloneta, and the visit to the Fishermen's Guild.

Note: For privacy and GDPR purposes, all individuals appearing in photos have consented to the use of their image for reporting and dissemination purposes.



Figure A1: Pilot Actions and ICM team at the Institut de Ciències del Mar (ICM-CSIC)



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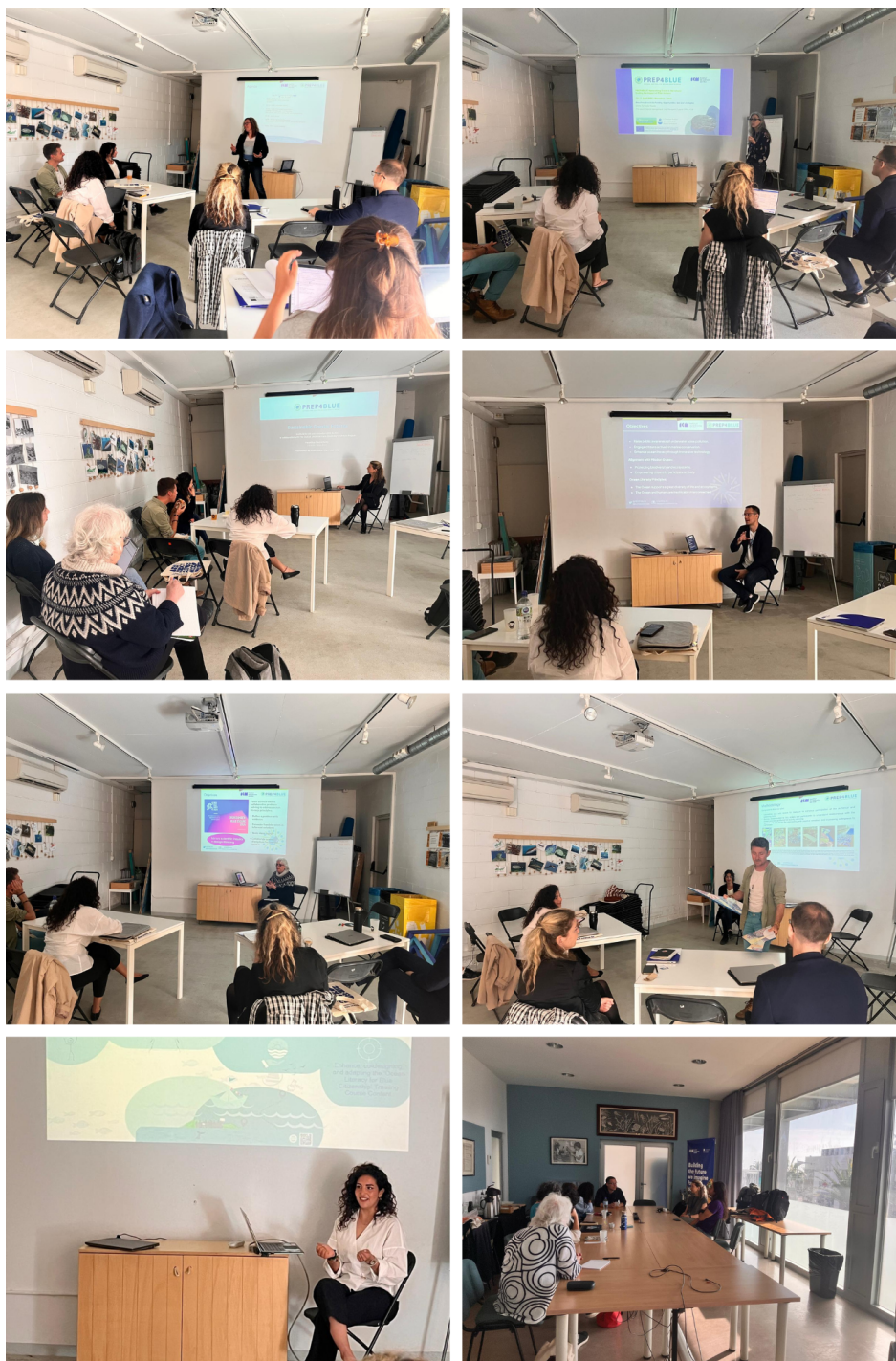


Figure A2: Presentations of the projects at the Centre de la Platja and the Institut de Ciències del Mar (ICM-CSIC).



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Figure A3: Exploring Barceloneta during the ethnographic walk, connecting with the neighbourhood's layered histories and its everyday's life.



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Figure A4: Gathered at the Torre del Relotge, discovering the beating heart of the port and its maritime identity.



Figure A6: Inside the Fishermen's Guild—listening to the voices and experiences of the local fishing community, and sharing a moment over snacks and conversation.

Acknowledgments

This gathering was made possible thanks to the energy, creativity, and generosity of many individuals and collaborators, both within and beyond the PREP4BLUE community.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to:

The Pilot Actions team members, for their presence, ideas, and commitment to co-creation:

Jade Zoghbi, Ladislav Chachignot, Michal Lovecky, Nicole Loeser, Sandra Lund and Sophia Laarissa Mantilla

As well as our **facilitator** from Colectiu Posidonia, Miguel Ángel Plaza and Arianna Bucci from the Centre de la Platja.

The local partners and collaborators who made the grounding and context of the event in Barceloneta so meaningful:

- Taller d'Història de la Barceloneta – *Sheila García, Sergi Verdejo, and Maria Jesús Vidal*
- Confraria de Pescadors de Barcelona – *José Manuel Juárez and Pere Bachs*
- Port Vell – *Mònica Gutiérrez, Ingrid Boqué, and David Pino*
- Restaurant L'Ostia – *Jaume Muedra*
- Catering - *Menjador ca la Rosa*

The ICM-CSIC and PREP4BLUE team, for their coordination, facilitation, and support throughout:

- Ifigeneia Giannoukakou-Leontsini
- Carine Simon
- Noemí Fuster
- Maria Elena Carbajal
- Josep Lluís Pelegrí

Last but not least, ERINN Innovation, for their support and collaboration in making the logistics smoother and helping ensure that everything ran seamlessly behind the scenes.

Each of you contributed to creating a space that was both reflective and forward-looking!

Gràcies de tot cor!