
CIRCULAR ECONOMY IMPACT OVER THE BLUE GROWTH AND THE BLUE CAREERS

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Introduction

The circular economy business models demonstrate how a firm creates and captures value. They are used to help entrepreneurs and decision makers define and communicate their business ideas, or for established firms to experiment with potential changes to business practices. In with the circular economy issues is the concept of the sustainability in blue economy, and its outreach into its sectors for the blue growth – bridging to innovation and sustainability in the maritime sectors.

The focus of the current paper is to bridge the trends and drives in the circular aspects of the blue growth to the human resources needs and their up scaling. It became popular to name the vocations and skills in the blue economy as “blue careers”. Which are the specific blue careers skill and how to meet the entrepreneurs and managers in the blue growth sectors is one of the matters in the NRF supported research project of the Burgas Free University “Expectations of the Bulgarian Entrepreneurs and Managers towards the Continuing Vocational Education of the Human Resources in the Organisation”, and the paper is supported in its frames.

The system for career development is essential for the development of any circular economy sector, incl. the blue economy, because it offers well-developed human resource that can provide long-term economic growth and development. The paper deals with career development system in the blue economy, it covers all elements of a career development’s system including vocational guidance for the professions in the blue economy and the creation of "blue career platform", training and qualification courses in the fields of blue economy and creation of university training programs for specialists with master's educational level. The areas where the project will intervene are the marine tourism, marine contractors, and marine ecology. In these areas of the blue economy our research showed a deficit - in some cases of skills in other of knowledge. The main problem is a mismatch between supply and demand.

In line the entrepreneurs and managers involved in circular economy practices are trying to achieve environmental and/or social goals. Towards the sectors of the blue growth the circular economy opportunities might be focused on growing

numbers of green or eco-conscious consumers together with developing products from alternative or underutilized sources such as algae or waste. On the other side, more on the blue careers is to channel in platforms to rent goods or services or managing environmental threats such as climate change or ocean pollution.

De-risking major investments under the circular economy models and boosting blue innovations on land and at sea

The idea of the “blue economy” is related to the promotion of economic growth, social inclusion, and living standards in line with ensuring environmental sustainability of the coastal areas at the seas, oceans and rivers. It refers to the decoupling of socioeconomic development through sea-related sectors and activities from environmental degradation. The blue economy has diverse components, including established traditional maritime industries such as fisheries, tourism, and maritime transport, but also new and emerging activities, such as offshore renewable energy, aquaculture, seabed extractive activities, and marine biotechnology and bioprospecting. A number of services provided by ocean ecosystems, and for which markets do not exist, also contribute significantly to economic and other human activity such as carbon sequestration, coastal protection, waste disposal and the existence of biodiversity.

For the upcoming period the key will be to develop new bio-based marine value chains and open up new markets. Developing smart and connected territories between land and sea and strengthening the international seas and oceans research/innovation cooperation to promote a globally sustainable blue economy and partly the concept of the circular economy and the blue careers go in line with the social economy trend now. social economy encompasses a variety of businesses.

Organisations and legal forms, such as non-profit associations, cooperatives, mutual societies, foundations, and social enterprises might be actively involved. They share the feature of systematically putting people first, reinvesting most of the profit back into the organisation or a social cause, and having a participatory form of governance. They play an important role in job creation, work integration and inclusive and sustainable growth. They operate in a large variety of economic sectors, such as social services, health care, social housing, affordable energy to the most vulnerable, recycling, retail, tourism, hospitality.

EU has launched a large number of actions to support the development of social enterprises and the social economy under the 2011 Social Business Initiative and the 2016 Start-up and Scale-up initiative. Accordingly, a sustainable business model is an extension of the business models concept designed to account for sustainable development goals. The businesses considering such practices include environmental and social sources of costs and benefits and recognize that value can be provided for a variety of stakeholders beyond the focal firm and its shareholders. In doing so, those sustainable models often deviate from traditional profit maximization value logics to include goals such as job creation and environmental protection.

The sustainable Blue Economy is expected to grow at pace over the next decade and offers significant opportunities for investment. Several studies have provided estimates of this growth potential. WWF has estimated that overall global

ocean assets, including ecosystem services, are worth \$24 trillion and that a significant percentage of these assets will rely on healthy, productive, and resilient oceans to maintain their value. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) conservatively valued the Blue Economy's contribution to the global economy in 2010 alone at \$1.5 trillion in gross value added (GVA) terms. With an estimated three billion people relying directly on the sea for their livelihoods, and GVA set to reach \$3 trillion by 2030, the Blue Economy has the potential to outperform the global economy, in terms of both value added and employment, if managed in a sustainable manner.

Circular economy and the blue careers pathways

Circular economy elements in the touristic service – 0-plastics in the kitchen, bringing less luggage; using local public transport. Sharing capacities and long seasons instead of overcrowded pick periods and then in Bulgaria we have widespread use of wheat-made cups instead of plastic, and the “blue label” introduced for plastic free beach services.

Speaking on the artificial Intelligence application in the tourism, it's now and here. And proud enough we may say that in our country Bulgaria, for the last couple of years we had a tremendous move towards applying the virtual assistants (popular as the chat-bots) at the hotels. But mostly we consider the accelerating power of the AI in pushing the tourism towards:

- Big data for all the activities and spending modes of the tourists
- Marketing tools and targeting selected needs of the customers
- AI in pushing the tourism towards
- Automation of the routine operations for the tour agents and tour operators

Let us just imagine we are in the time, when a living person on the other side of the phone line is not needed to make a reservation and find the best matching route and price. Similar with the desks at the receptions, same with the waiters at the restaurants. The client might check-in and out, and select-pay-grab the food and drink. And the people occupying the positions may engage in much more creative activities – animation and socializing the visitors.

The ‘workation’ trend is the author's favourite among the trends of sustainability to tourism. When previous expert government took office some 5 years ago, they promoted in Bulgaria, the idea of short-term-city tourism, and in fact the attracted by the cheap flight and convenient meeting points folks, proved to be exactly the combiners of working and vacation. Workation version in Edu-kation with a lot of lecturers and students now enjoying both their mobilities and touring at the cities and countries of their destination.

And the digital nomads as a special “tribe” of the Workation – they are all around already – more and more on the Bulgarian Black sea coast – like in Burgas, and in our mountains. The USA is still not outscored with its 10 mil “nomads”, but the open borders within EU, even now in the Covid waves are to change the inflows.

On the social media, we must state – not only massive, but replacing more and more the “word of mouth” approach of selling. Especially for the tourism with:

- Sharing the experience

- Following the ‘adventurers’”
- And the tons of pictures of course

They create the contemporary heritage, not a privilege of few writers, but a creation virtually by everyone with a device in a hand. In 2020, the author was involved in a combination of desk research experiment, and a case of drafting project proposal under the EU funder (the European Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Agency as contracting authority). The general concept of the project was to improve the overall structure of employment in the blue economy sector through enhancing the competences and reducing of deficits in the blue economy via creation of integrated interactive virtual career, training, blue career platform, blue jobs fair and other educational and informative events with multidisciplinary character.

The concept of the project is based on a fundamental objective of social development, namely human resource development by creating an environment for enhancing of knowledge, improving skills and competences, following the principle of interaction between business and education, as well as the model of unification of individual structural elements in an innovative and integrated system of career development.

The principles on which the concept was built are actuality of knowledge and skills; interactivity of the methods; relevance of objectives and results; informative for the status and perspectives of the blue sector; prediction of needs; quality of service, innovation of the solutions. The project proposes an integrated model to improve the capacity of the blue sector in the economy and particularly in inclusivity of different levels both in horizontal and vertical level, which makes it necessary to overcome the deficits of the blue economy and ensuring of blue growth.

The most important project’s aim is to increase the efficiency and competitiveness of some very important sectors of the blue economy, thus achieving the objectives of blue growth. The project implementation will contribute to the development of a blue economy through preparation of qualified staff in the field and will give a model to overcome the lack of interest in this area of the economy.

The project would also focus on providing information on career development and guidance in the field of blue economy for students, unemployed people and employees in identified as well as training in professional orientation in order to motivate people to be a part of the blue professions. It has some innovative ideas directed towards popularization of the blue economy sector such as: Virtual centre for blue careers, which is a place for interaction between education and business in support of Blue Growth in Bulgaria, Romania, and Greece and will also provide information about different jobs, knowledge and skills necessity for blue economy career and opportunities for re-qualification.

With the essential activities, namely: Blue career development concept and guideline; Education and Training; Blue Interactive virtual centre. The project will develop a favourable environment for training specialists and experts with the necessary and relevant skills in different maritime sectors by allowing vocational guidance and training - vocational and in higher education. There would be organized a lot of training initiatives: training seminars and courses for all ages in order to increase the competence of stakeholders in fields of great importance in the blue economy.

The trainings will contribute to the education of environmental awareness among stakeholders by providing organized visits of students to foster their interest in the blue economy. There will also be thematic lectures and events with representatives of the business who will share their personal experiences. The centre will give the possibility for stakeholders to share information, knowledge, and best practices, through a special module included in the Centre's structure. The aim of such activities is to raise awareness amongst wide public of blue economy and the prospects for career in its sectors. Program similar to the dual system modus is planned within the project. Thus, theoretical knowledge will meet practical skills and requirements in the form of internships, apprenticeships, educational visits and other, including actively the economic subjects operating in the field of blue economy.

One of the project's main assets is that the Virtual centre will be built based on partnership between universities, schools, NGOs and business structures from Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea related to the regional development. Investigation of the blue regional economy will be organized and training in different levels – vocational and university one for various maritime sectors identified as challenging in terms of skill's gaps and employability in blue economy: Blue tourism; Blue ecology; Blue entrepreneurship Blue transport, blue engineering. The project is built on a very systematic basic starting with the professional orientation and career development, knowing about the blue skills, going through vocational training and high-level education and finishing with the creation of Virtual centre, which is a unique innovation in the wider Black Sea region.

The improving of the structure of employment, enhancing the competences of young people and reducing of deficits in the blue economy via creation of integral international information sources for improvement of the marine skills and increasing the capacity of employee and supporting a blue career development in the in marine sector. This is planned to be achieved by several activities such as: developing of a blue career platform and career guidance for blue economy, which would be focused on enhancing the interest towards blue carriers and the role of the seas and other water basins for the economic development of the countries, through gathering and systematization of data in a blue platform; professional orientation in order to increase the awareness to the sea and improve the knowledge how people can realize their potential using the blue resources; education and trainings in professional skills and within university programmes in Bulgaria, Romania and Greece.

Establishment of a modern interactive virtual centre for blue careers for fostering blue economy mobility, with providing opportunities for spreading of information, professional orientation and skills' trainings; Awareness raising initiatives for popularization of common blue horizons through experience exchange, mobility opportunities, organized and public events-roundtables, conferences, development of events like of Blue career One stop shop for providing of support and cooperation actions among the local communities, within which would be organized Blue jobs fair in Burgas - Bulgaria, Constanta - Romania, Alexandroupoli - Greece. The activities are decomposed in details in order to make easy their implementation and to make them understandable for all experts, representatives of the target group and stakeholders.

Conclusion

Promoting the blue economy requires access to affordable long-term financing at scale, but governments and coastal local authorities often have limited success in catalyzing public and private investments in the blue economy, particularly at a scale that would allow the transition of established sectors of the economy or that would open up new sectors. Sources of financing can include support for governance reform, ecosystem-based management of marine areas and resources, and other enabling conditions required for a blue economy. In parallel, correcting market and policy failures through the application of science based integrated maritime planning and barrier removal instruments can not only act catalytically to restore and protect coasts, it can also generate sizeable business activity and jobs when job creation activities. There are small but growing number of international public financing and other innovative instruments that are emerging to finance investments in existing, nascent, and new sectors. Examples include financing through marine conservation, such as visitor entry fees to marine protected areas, etc.

Supporting SMEs efforts for the development- deployment and market replication of innovative solutions for blue growth is one of the most important barriers for the development of innovative maritime economic activities is the lack of access to finance for SMEs. The idea is to develop high potential, but high-risk innovative ideas and to bring them close to the market. Establishing facilities for promoting start-ups oriented towards the circular and blue economy in the region is another way through. Developing regional expertise for the design and performance of big infrastructure interregional projects related with the sea and coasts. And a fresh idea would be in promoting youth mobility related to the blue economy among the countries in the region both educational and vocational.

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