



**Good Practice Story Title:** Blue Atlantic Forum: forum for discussion of the blue economy in the Atlantic Ocean.

**Destination:** Baiona

**Country:** Spain

**Submitting Organization:** Ayuntamiento de Baiona

**Category:**

- Destination Management
- Nature & Scenery
- Environment & Climate
- Culture & Tradition
- Thriving Communities
- Business & Marketing

**Destination description:**

Baiona, situated in the north-west of Spain, is a small town where the sea and mountains harmoniously coexist. Despite being a tourist destination, Baiona has maintained its unique identity by cherishing its history, culture, architecture, and nature. The town boasts a diverse gastronomy centered around seafood, with a tourism industry primarily composed of small businesses that prioritize quality. Visitors to Baiona can relish in the peaceful streets, serene beaches, and picturesque landscapes. Unlike traditional tourist-centric areas, tourism in Baiona seamlessly integrates with local life, with both tourists and residents frequenting beaches, promenades, and bars alike. The town holds significant historical and cultural value, notably being the first European port to learn of America's existence when one of Christopher Columbus's caravels arrived in 1493. Exploring Baiona reveals remnants of this historic event, with a historic center adorned with monuments, a fortified fortress, and a plethora of festivities and activities celebrating the town's rich culture and heritage.



## Summary of Good Practice Story:

The BAF (Blue Atlantic Forum) is a forum that aims to create a space for training, cooperation and dissemination on the blue economy from an Atlantic-European perspective.

It is the meeting point for institutions, professionals and students of the blue Atlantic economy. It is a congress in hybrid format: face-to-face and online. Three days of round tables, talks and workshops with the participation of top-level speakers from the blue economy.

The main objective of BAF is to create a space for cooperation, discussion, training and dissemination of the blue economy from an Atlantic-European perspective.

## Issues faced:

The Blue Atlantic Forum (BAF) is an initiative dedicated to fostering training, cooperation, and dissemination in the blue economy from an Atlantic-European perspective. It serves as a convergence point for institutions, professionals, and students engaged in the blue Atlantic economy. BAF is structured as a hybrid congress, offering both face-to-face and online participation, and spans three days of round tables, talks, and workshops featuring top-tier speakers from the blue economy sector.

The primary objective of BAF is to establish a collaborative space for discussion, training, and dissemination on the blue economy, specifically focusing on the Atlantic-European context. To develop this project, a SWOT analysis of the fishing sector and its interplay with tourism, the environment, the economy, and sustainability was conducted. The identified weaknesses and threats include:

- Insufficient information on fish products for consumers (origin, quality, etc.).
- Decline of traditional seafaring culture.
- Lack of generational renewal in the fishing sector.
- Decrease in fishing activity: reduced catches and income.
- Employment difficulties for women.
- Diminishing fishery resources and poor management of existing resources.
- Inadequate dissemination of good fishing practices.
- Fragmentation within the fishing sector, lacking unity for joint initiatives.
- Limited visibility of advancements in the small-scale fishing sector.
- The fishing sector's reluctance to view tourism as an attractive or viable diversification alternative.
- Low levels of innovation and diversification in complementary leisure activities and services.
- Insufficient collaboration between fishing, tourism, aquaculture, and other sectors.
- Pollution of estuaries.
- Low environmental awareness.
- Limited knowledge of biodiversity in the natural environment.
- Weak collaboration between social and institutional agents.
- High individualism stemming from a poorly structured society with low community awareness



and citizen participation.

- Prevalence of poor practices in the fishing sector and increasing poaching.
- Overexploitation of fishery resources.
- Poor coordination among public institutions.

In summary, there is a significant lack of knowledge and collaboration between different sectors, as well as between these sectors and relevant institutions. There is also a shortage of forums where various sectors can learn about each other's challenges, solutions, and opportunities, interact, and create synergies for sustainable development, both economically and environmentally.

Additionally, the EU roadmap aims to position Europe as the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 and to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This aligns not only with the achievement of SDG 14 but also with the strategic goals and objectives of the United Nations European Green Pact, ensuring a balance between environmental, economic, and social aspects.

### **Solution:**

The Baiona City Council decided to create this forum as a space for training, cooperation and dissemination on the blue economy from an Atlantic perspective based on the productive sectors not only of Baiona but also of the entire Atlantic area.

Our region has a great economic, ecological and touristic potential, with many potentialities, but an integrated approach is needed to revalue them. In the Blue Atlantic Forum, diversification, sustainability, enhancement and exploitation of the natural and cultural heritage as well as entrepreneurship are key elements.

It is a forum that brings together some public institutions, organisations, companies, NGOs, ..... It is aimed at students and the general public as well as institutions and professionals from sectors such as tourism, fishing, aquaculture and marine biotechnology, thus linking the primary and tertiary sectors, tradition with the avant-garde and innovation.

### **Methods, Steps, and Tools applied:**

In 2021, a decision was made to establish a forum focused on the blue economy, bringing together key sectors in the region to discuss challenges, identify opportunities, and foster synergies among various sectors and institutions.

To facilitate this, a biannual grant was requested from the Local Action Group for the Fishing Sector (Galp Ría de Vigo Baixo Miño), enabling the inaugural editions to be held in 2021 and 2022.

Following the success of these initial editions, another biannual grant application was submitted, leading to the third edition in 2024 and the planned fourth edition in 2025. The forum receives



support from several entities, including the City Council of Baiona, Galp, Xunta de Galicia, Diputación de Pontevedra, Port of Vigo, and Abanca.

The forum spans three days at the Parador de Baiona. Mornings feature lectures and round tables, while afternoons are devoted to workshops, experiential activities, and site visits.

During the first two editions, each day was dedicated to a specific theme: maritime and coastal tourism, marine biotechnology, and fishing and aquaculture, with each thematic session aligned with relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In 2021, sustainability served as the overarching theme, and in 2022, the focus shifted to innovation. To enhance intersectoral synergies, the 2023 edition abandoned sector-specific days in favor of three thematic blocks: governance, entrepreneurship and innovation, and blue ecosystems.

The forum operates in a hybrid format, with both in-person attendance and live online streaming via its YouTube channel.

The 2021 and 2022 editions were held in October and November, while the 2023 edition took place in March.

## Achievements and Results:

The importance of this forum is recognized for its role in showcasing ongoing initiatives, methodologies, and actionable insights for companies and individuals in the relevant fields. Additionally, the forum provides information on available subsidies and grants, promotes sustainability and good practices, and, crucially, fosters synergies among participants. This enables mutual awareness, promotion, and collaboration, facilitating the emergence of new projects.

The forum successfully brought together various public institutions, including the Xunta de Galicia, Provincial Council of Pontevedra, Council of Baiona, GALP, numerous fishermen's associations, the Tourism Cluster of Galicia, and the Port of Vigo.

Significant synergies were created among speakers and attendees, leading to several key conclusions:

1. Administrative Coordination: The creation of synergies among different administrations is

deemed necessary to coordinate and advance on issues such as fleet decarbonization, emissions neutralization, and research into the energy use of the sea.

2. Financing Options: Abanca Mar, Fundación Biodiversidad, and the Ministry of Finance outlined financing options available from public and private entities for projects related to entrepreneurship and innovation in the blue economy.

3. Innovative Solutions by Port Authority of Vigo: The Port Authority of Vigo's work was highlighted for its innovative solutions in marine transport logistics operations, improving the traceability of fishing products, decarbonizing fishing vessels, implementing new fuels, and integrating the port with the city and society.

4. Marine Resource Utilization: Examples of utilizing marine resources for new products were



presented, such as a workshop on gummies and marine tourism experiences.

5. Sector Revaluation and Gender Equality: The forum is recognized as a vital tool for revaluing the fishing sector, caring for the oceans, revitalizing marine tourism, and promoting gender equality in fishing. It also serves as a platform for disseminating activities and exchanging knowledge.

6. Climate Change Focus: A call was made for administrations to prioritize climate change, research, and implement eco-efficient solutions that protect marine ecosystems, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and decrease dependence on fossil fuels.

The third edition of the forum achieved better results in terms of attendance, received increased support from public institutions (including participation from a representative of the Government's Ministry of Finance), and garnered greater media impact.

### **Lessons Learned and Advice:**

In the initial two editions of the forum, each day was dedicated to a specific theme—tourism, fisheries and aquaculture, and marine biotechnology. It became evident that this approach primarily attracted professionals and students from the respective fields, hindering the creation of synergies between different sectors. To address this, the third edition restructured the daily blocks into broader themes: governance, entrepreneurship and innovation, and blue ecosystems. The roundtable discussions were designed to be cross-cutting, encompassing all represented sectors.

The scheduling of the first two editions in November and October, respectively, was changed for the third edition to March. This adjustment was made to benefit from more favorable weather for afternoon activities and to commence Baiona's activity season earlier. The period between the Arribada Festival (first weekend in March) and Easter (usually in April) typically experienced a lull in activity.

In previous editions, the political dimension of the roundtables was prominent, but the technical aspects garnered more interest. Consequently, the 2024 edition, while maintaining the involvement of political figures due to their roles as organizational managers, emphasized technical content and the participation of companies.

Attendance has improved annually. In the prior editions, the tourism day was the most attended, with approximately 40 participants, while the other days saw fewer than 30 attendees. However, in 2024, attendance significantly increased, with the first day attracting a full house of 80 attendees.

Additionally, several improvements were implemented:

- Timely dissemination of information to the press for each day.
- Earlier distribution of institutional invitations.
- Enhancement of the BAF's corporate image through the preparation of folders, flyers for speakers, and the creation of an event website.

Planning for BAF 2025 is already underway.





## Recognitions and Additional References

Website: <https://blueatlanticforum.org/>

<https://galp.xunta.gal/ria-de-vigo-a-guarda/baf-blue-atlantic-forum>

You can see the presentations of all editions on the YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@blueatlanticforum>



