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Book of Abstracts



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Bridging blue economy skills gaps in the south Adriatic: Comparative evidence from Montenegro, Albania and Italy

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Abstract

The transition toward a sustainable and competitive blue economy depends on a workforce equipped with technical, digital, environmental and managerial competences that reflect rapidly changing labour-market needs. This study presents a comparative assessment of blue economy skills gaps in Montenegro, Albania and Italy, conducted within the Interreg IPA South Adriatic SKILLS project.

The analysis is based on eight Skills Definition Labs and a harmonised multilingual survey involving companies, institutions and other blue economy stakeholders. It examines five dimensions: demand for training, need for professional retraining, relevance of existing education programmes, critical skills for the next 5–10 years, and organisational preparedness for future sectoral requirements. The comparative approach covers marine living resources, renewable energy, port activities, shipbuilding and repair, maritime transport, coastal tourism, maritime security, and research and infrastructure.

The results reveal a broad regional demand for additional training and reskilling, alongside important differences between countries and sectors. Montenegro reports comparatively stronger assessments of education provision in shipbuilding, ship repair and maritime transport, while Albania records higher evaluations in marine living resources. Environmental management emerges as a particularly important future competence in Albania, whereas project management, innovation and research and development show similar relevance in Montenegro and Italy. Across the three countries, gaps remain in the alignment of education with practical experience, emerging technologies and industry needs.

The findings support the development of joint curricula, blended and work-based learning, targeted reskilling schemes, and stronger cooperation among education providers, companies and public authorities. A coordinated cross-border approach can improve workforce preparedness and contribute to a more innovative, resilient and sustainable South Adriatic blue economy.

Keywords: blue economy, skills gaps, workforce preparedness, cross-border education, south Adriatic

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