

ESG — LAB —

NEWSLETTER VOL. 7



Co-funded by
the European Union

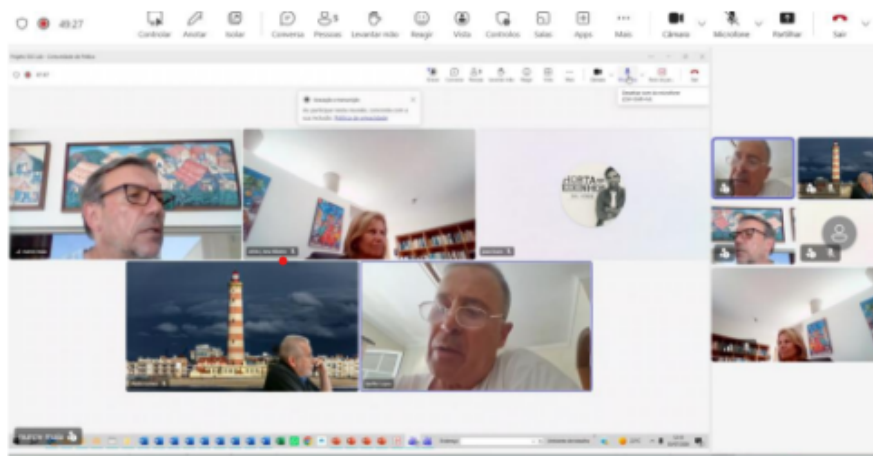
1. National Communities of Practice: Turning ESG Dialogue into Practical Action

As part of the ESG LAB project, the National Communities of Practice in Portugal, Cyprus and Greece brought together SMEs, professionals, experts and stakeholders connected to the Blue Economy in order to exchange experiences, discuss practical ESG challenges and explore ways to strengthen sustainability practices across different sectors.

These meetings were designed not only to raise awareness, but also to create a collaborative space where participants could share real needs, identify barriers and contribute to practical solutions for ESG implementation.

Portugal: Practical barriers, funding and leadership

The Portuguese National Community of Practice was organised online by Dialogue Diversity and brought together 13 participants from SMEs, public entities, associations, academia and other organisations connected to the Blue Economy.

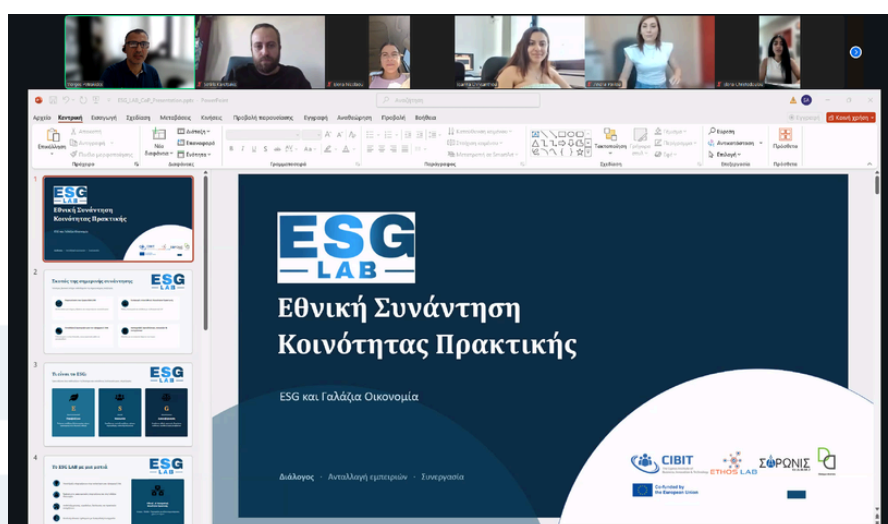


The discussion focused on some of the most pressing challenges faced by SMEs, including access to funding, the cost of ESG implementation, resistance to organisational change, decarbonisation, workforce-related issues and the need for practical and realistic tools. Participants also highlighted the importance of leadership commitment and stronger cooperation between SMEs, public authorities and port-related organisations.

Cyprus: From ESG concepts to measurable action

In Cyprus, the e-Community of Practice organised by CIBIT brought together 12 participants and focused strongly on the practical application of ESG principles within SMEs and Blue Economy-related sectors.

Participants explored ESG reporting, data collection, KPI development, realistic target-setting and the role of mentoring. Particular attention was given to the need for SMEs to use proportionate and meaningful indicators rather than overcomplicated reporting systems.



The interactive discussion showed the importance of linking ESG with day-to-day business processes, management responsibilities and continuous improvement. Participants also recognised the value of practical guidance and continued communication between businesses and experts.

Greece: From ESG assessment to practical action

The Greek National Community of Practice, held on 10 September 2026, focused on the practical value of ESG for SMEs and stakeholders connected to the Blue Economy. Participants explored how ESG can support businesses in gaining a clearer picture of their maturity, identifying gaps and priorities, improving transparency towards clients and partners, strengthening the documentation required for financing, and building a common language for cooperation and exchange of good practices.

Particular attention was also given to the practical resources developed by ESG LAB. Participants were introduced to tools such as the ESG Diagnostic Tool, the ESG self-assessment and reporting resources, the Reporting Template, and the project's training and webinar material. These resources are designed to help SMEs move step by step from assessment to prioritisation and, ultimately, to concrete action.

A key message of the meeting was simple: ESG tools are most valuable when they lead to realistic actions adapted to the actual needs and capacity of each organisation.



2. Training the Mentors: Preparing for the Mentoring Phase

As ESG LAB entered its pilot mentoring phase, mentors from the partner countries participated in an online training session focused on how to support SMEs in a practical and structured way.

The session introduced the 70-minute mentoring model, guiding mentors through the SME's ESG context, strengths and gaps, data and KPIs, practical improvements, and agreed follow-up actions.

Mentors were also trained to use the ESG LAB Reporting Plan, Toolkit, Reporting Template, webinar materials and Community of Practice according to each SME's actual needs and capacity.

The main message was clear: mentoring should be practical, realistic and action-oriented, helping SMEs take feasible steps towards stronger ESG reporting.

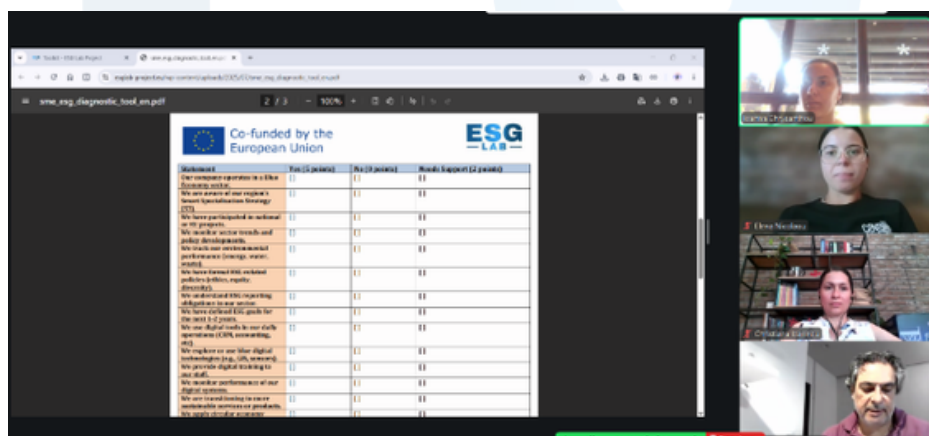


3. From ESG Awareness to Action: Supporting Blue Economy SMEs through Mentoring

As the ESG LAB project approaches its final stage, one of its key activities has been the implementation of a dedicated mentoring process for SMEs operating within the Blue Economy. The aim of this phase was to move beyond theoretical knowledge and provide companies with more practical, tailored support based on their own needs, level of ESG maturity and business context.

Through the mentoring process, participating SMEs had the opportunity to work closely with mentors, identify their main ESG-related gaps and better understand how environmental, social and governance considerations can be integrated into their everyday operations. Particular attention was given to challenges such as ESG data collection, the identification of relevant indicators and KPIs, the definition of reporting priorities, stakeholder engagement and the structuring of ESG information.

The mentoring sessions also supported SMEs in becoming more familiar with the practical resources developed within ESG LAB. Depending on their needs, companies were introduced to tools such as the ESG Reporting Plan, the ESG Toolkit, the ESG Reporting Template, webinar and learning materials, as well as support available through the project's Community of Practice.



Overall, the mentoring phase represents an important step in ESG LAB's effort to make ESG more accessible and applicable for Blue Economy SMEs, helping businesses move from general awareness towards more structured and practical action.

4.ESG LAB Final Meeting Successfully Held: “From ESG Awareness to Action”



The Final Meeting of the ESG LAB project, was successfully held on 14 September 2026 under the central theme “From ESG Awareness to Action”.

The meeting marked the completion of an important journey dedicated to supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in the Blue Economy in better understanding and applying Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles. The event provided an opportunity to present the key results, tools and activities developed throughout the project, while also opening a meaningful discussion on the challenges and opportunities associated with integrating ESG criteria into SMEs, with particular emphasis on the Blue Economy sector.

Before the open session began, an internal partners’ meeting took place, focusing on the coordination of the project’s final activities, a review of ESG LAB’s overall progress and the discussion of the remaining tasks prior to the official completion of the project. The open meeting then took place from 13:00 to 16:30 CET, bringing together project partners, academics and professionals working in the fields of sustainability and the Blue Economy.

The overall coordination of the Final Meeting and the open discussion was undertaken by Maria Psyrris, Project Coordinator at SARONIS ATEVE, ensuring the smooth flow of the meeting and coherence between the different thematic session

Welcome & the ESG LAB Journey

The first session focused on the journey and overall philosophy of the ESG LAB project. The opening remarks were delivered by Dr. Nikolaos Melios, Co-Founder of the Centre for Research on Governance & Sustainability – Ethos Lab, one of the project partners. During the same session, Nikos Avgeris, Senior Economist at the Center for Governance & Sustainability Research – Ethos Lab IKE, presented the overall project framework and the key challenge that ESG LAB sought to address for SMEs operating within established Blue Economy sectors.

What ESG LAB Delivered: Results, Tools & Platform

The session “What ESG LAB delivered: results, tools & platform” was presented by Maria Psyrris, Project Coordinator at SARONIS ATEVE.

The presentation highlighted the main outcomes developed throughout the project, including the educational materials, webinars, diagnostic quiz, self-assessment tool, ESG Toolkit and related templates, good practices, the digital platform and the ESG LAB Community of Practice.

Together, these resources were designed to provide SMEs with practical guidance and accessible tools that can support them in understanding ESG requirements and gradually integrating sustainability considerations into their business activities.

From Learning to Implementation: SME Mentoring

The next session, “From learning to implementation: SME mentoring results”, was presented by Ioanna Chrysanthou from CIBIT.

The session focused on the needs identified among participating SMEs and on how the mentoring process can support companies in moving from ESG awareness towards practical implementation.

Particular attention was given to the collection and use of ESG-related data, the identification of relevant KPIs and the development of more structured ESG reporting processes.

Invited Speakers: The Next Chapter for ESG & Blue Economy SMEs

A central part of the Final Meeting was the invited speakers’ session, dedicated to the future of ESG for SMEs operating in the Blue Economy.

The session was introduced by Nektaria Marava, External Expert at SARONIS ATEVE, and brought together experts from academia, sustainability, maritime activities and the Blue Economy.

The invited speakers included:

Anastasia Christodoulou, Assistant Professor of Sustainable Blue Economy, Department of Maritime Studies, University of Piraeus, with the presentation “ESG in Shipping and Ports: The Next Day.”

Andreas Andrikopoulos, Professor of Accounting and Finance in Shipping and Transport, Department of Maritime Studies, University of Piraeus, with the presentation “ESG Reporting in Shipping.”

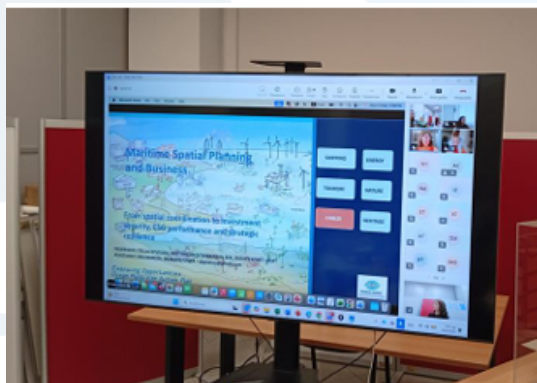
Stella Kyvelou, Eastern Mediterranean Basin Expert under the MSP Assistance Mechanism and Founder & CEO of SDMED MARIS, with the presentation “The ‘Why’ of Maritime Spatial Planning: Its Connection with Sustainable Entrepreneurship.”

Konstantina Kottaridi, Professor, Director of the MSc Programme in Bioeconomy, Circular Economy and Sustainable Development, and Director of the Laboratory of Sustainable Development and Circular Economy at the University of Piraeus, with the presentation “ESG, Competitiveness and Financing: The Next Day for Blue Economy SMEs.”

Ioanna Chrysanthou, CIBIT, with the presentation “From ESG Awareness to Action: Supporting Blue Economy SMEs.”

Maria João R. F. Schaub Coelho, Shareholder and Managing Director of Ocean Safari, with the presentation “Ocean Safari: ESG Strategy for Marine Protection and Responsible Tourism.”

The presentations covered a wide range of topics connecting ESG with shipping, ports, sustainable entrepreneurship, access to finance, maritime spatial planning, marine protection and responsible tourism.



Through these different perspectives, the discussion highlighted that ESG is becoming increasingly relevant not only as a reporting or compliance requirement, but also as an important element of competitiveness, resilience and long-term sustainability for SMEs operating in the Blue Economy.

The Final Meeting offered an important opportunity to reflect on the achievements of ESG LAB, exchange knowledge among experts and project partners, and explore how the tools and knowledge developed through the project can continue to support SMEs beyond the formal end of the project.

Conclusions, Q&A & Closing

The meeting concluded with the session “Conclusions, Q&A & Closing”, presented by Ana Ribeiro from Dialogue Diversity. The session brought together the main conclusions and key outcomes of the project, while also providing space for questions from the audience, final reflections, acknowledgements to all participants and the official closing of the ESG LAB Final Meeting.

The Final Meeting highlighted not only the achievements and results of the ESG LAB project, but also the importance of continuing dialogue, knowledge exchange and collaboration around the practical implementation of ESG principles within the Blue Economy.



The ESG LAB Journey Continues

Although the ESG LAB project officially comes to an end in September 2026, its resources, tools and community will remain available beyond the project's lifetime.

The materials developed throughout ESG LAB — including the training resources, ESG tools and templates, digital platform, webinars and Community of Practice — will continue to be accessible through our website, offering ongoing support to SMEs, professionals and stakeholders interested in strengthening their ESG knowledge and practices.

At the same time, we are committed to keeping the conversation going. We encourage everyone who has followed, supported or participated in the project to stay connected with us through our communication channels, follow future updates and continue exchanging ideas, experiences and good practices around ESG and the Blue Economy.

The project may end here, but the knowledge, connections and commitment to a more sustainable Blue Economy continue.

FOLLOW US FOR MORE

COORDINATOR: ΣΑΡΩΝΙΣ
Κε.Δι.Βι.Μ.2

WEBSITE:



PARTNERS:



WEBSITE:



FACEBOOK:



Dialogue diversity

WEBSITE:



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

This project was funded with the support of the European Commission under the Erasmus+ programme. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.