# Marleen Jacobs



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**ROLE** Policy officer international research and technology infrastructures

**ORGANISATION** WEWIS

**PRESENTATION** “Flemish and European policy context for research and technology infrastructures"

**SHORT INTRODUCTION**

- *Belgian governmental representative for MARINERG-i and SLICES*
- *Responsible for developing TI policies in line with EU RTI strategy*
- *& implementing and shaping existing RI policies*

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Flanders
State of the Art

# Flemish and European policy context for research and technology infrastructures

Marleen Jacobs

MARINERG-I Stakeholderevent 8.10.2026, Oostende

# Agenda

0. Introduction

1. Flemish policies and financial instruments

2. European policies and financial instruments

3. Case: MARINERG-I

4. Current & Future developments

# 1.

# FLEMISH POLICIES AND FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

# WEWILS policy domain

Work, Economy, Science, Innovation, Agriculture and Social Economy

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Department** | **WEWIS: Work, Economy, Science, Innovation and Social Economy** | | | | |
| **Internal autonomous agencies (IVA)** | **VLAIO Innovation & Entrepreneurship** | Agency for Agriculture and Fisheries | ILVO (IVA + EV) Agrifood & fisheries research | | |
| **External agencies Public law (EVA)** | VDAB Employment & vocational training | Meise Botanic Garden | | | |
| **External agencies Private law (EVA)** | **Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO)** | **PMV** | **LRM** | **VLAM** | |

**Advisory bodies: VARIO (within WEWIS) SALV (at SERV) SERV (cross-domain advice)**

# VLAIO support for RI & TI

Investment, project costs, access and use

ERDF (EFRO)

Research projects

Research infrastructure call

for universities of applied sciences

Moonshot LSI

Development projects

COOCK+

TETRA

Baekeland mandates

IPCEI

Cluster organisations

Business advisers

Spark: planned reform of COOCK+ and TETRA

Word size does not represent funding volume.

# Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO)
# RI support overview

Across disciplines: equipment, collections, natural habitats, corpora, databases and digital platforms. Facilities may be single-sited, distributed or virtual.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Medium-scale infrastructure**<br>€150,000–€1 million* | Investment support for research facilities and resources. |
| **Large-scale infrastructure**<br>At least €1 million* | Investment support for major research facilities and resources. |
| **International infrastructure**<br>IRI programme | Flemish participation, activities and investments.<br>Political support and funding follow separate calls. |
| **Digital infrastructure**<br>VSC and Tier-1 access | FWO manages the Flemish Supercomputer Center.<br>Eligible researchers can request Tier-1 computing time. |
| **Project equipment**<br>Complementary support | Equipment costs within fundamental research projects, subject to the project regulations. |

*Programme thresholds exclude co-funding and include non-recoverable VAT.
These are infrastructure funding categories, not total call budgets.

# Research Foundation - Flanders
# International research infrastructure

## Political support and funding: separate calls

| | Roadmap call | Funding call |
|---|---|---|
| **Purpose** | Political support based on the strategic importance for Flanders. | Funding or refinancing of participation costs and investments. |
| **Entry point** | Participation that still requires political support from Flanders. | Prior political support or continuation of existing IRI funding. |
| **Outcome** | Political support only.<br>No funding through this call. | A separate assessment and a funding decision. |
| **Budget** | No grant funding.<br>Political support only. | IRI Call 2022: EUR 58.739.212 |

**Political support enables a funding application. It does not guarantee funding.**

# Research Foundation - Flanders
# International research infrastructure

## Funding procedure and key assessment points

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Call and intake** | Prior political support or existing IRI funding. Intake discussion before the full application. |
| 2 | **Application** | Scientific case for Flemish participation, with planned activities, investments and a funding request. |
| 3 | **Review and rebuttal** | At least three international reviewers assess the proposal. Applicants respond through a rebuttal. |
| 4 | **Scientific assessment** | Science Commission assesses scientific quality and interviews the applicants. |
| 5 | **Strategic assessment** | Very good/excellent proposals only: strategic value for Flanders and feasibility of the investment plan. |
| 6 | **Results** | FWO communicates the evaluation outcome and the funding decision. |

# International research infrastructure Flemish and Belgian responsibilities

## Flanders

**Decision and funding**

IRI calls determine political support and funding for Flemish participation.

**FWO and the WEWIS department**

FWO runs calls and scientific follow-up. The department coordinates partners and follows RI governance.

## Belgian level

**Coordination and formal membership**

Belgian entities jointly agree on participation. The federal minister signs for Belgian membership.

**Membership fee**

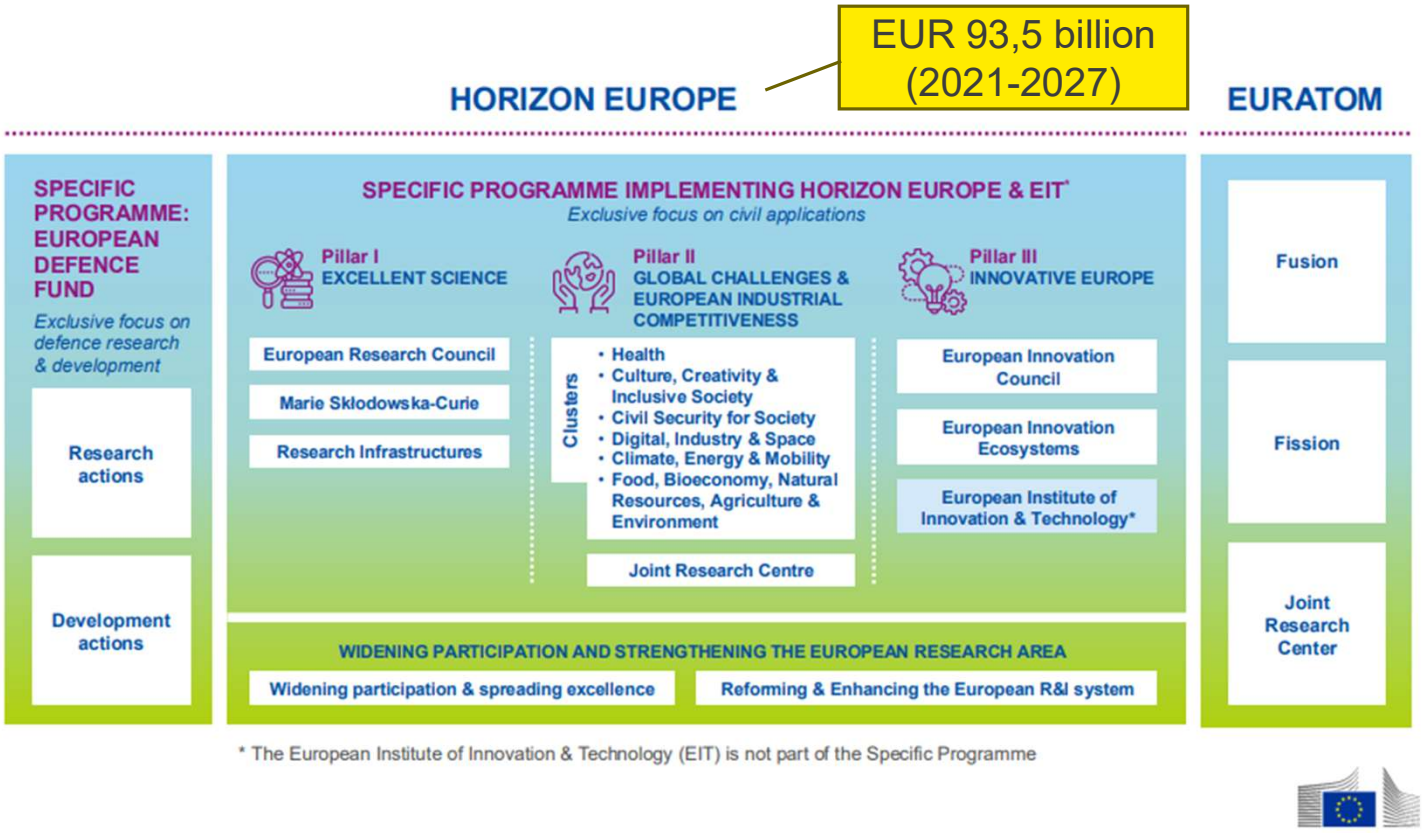
Belgium pays membership fees under existing arrangements. Regions fund infrastructure, staff and operations.

**Flemish and federal authorities coordinate as equals, without a hierarchy between levels.**

# 2.

# EUROPEAN POLICIES AND FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

# European RI Ecosystem: Financial Framework (Horizon Europe)




* The European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT) is not part of the Specific Programme

Pillar I

# EXCELLENT SCIENCE:

reinforcing and extending the **excellence of the Union's science base**

**European Research Council**

Frontier research by the best researchers and their teams

**€15.7 billion**

**Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions**

Equipping researchers with new knowledge and skills through mobility and training

**€6.5 billion**

**Research Infrastructures**

Integrated and inter-connected world-class research infrastructures

**€2.3 billion**

# European RI Ecosystem: Strategic Framework (ESFRI)

## ESFRI mandate

Set the European RI Roadmap, assess strategic relevance and monitor implementation.

## Funding responsibilities

Horizon Europe: separate proposals and competitive evaluation.
Countries and regions: long-term investment and operating support.

## Horizon Europe: INFRADEV calls

**HORIZON-INFRA-2026-DEV-01-01**

Concept development for new infrastructures and major upgrades or extensions.

**HORIZON-INFRA-2027-DEV-01-01**

Preparation of new ESFRI Roadmap 2026 projects: legal, financial and technical readiness.

**HORIZON-INFRA-2026-DEV-01-03**

Evolution and long-term sustainability of pan-European research infrastructures.

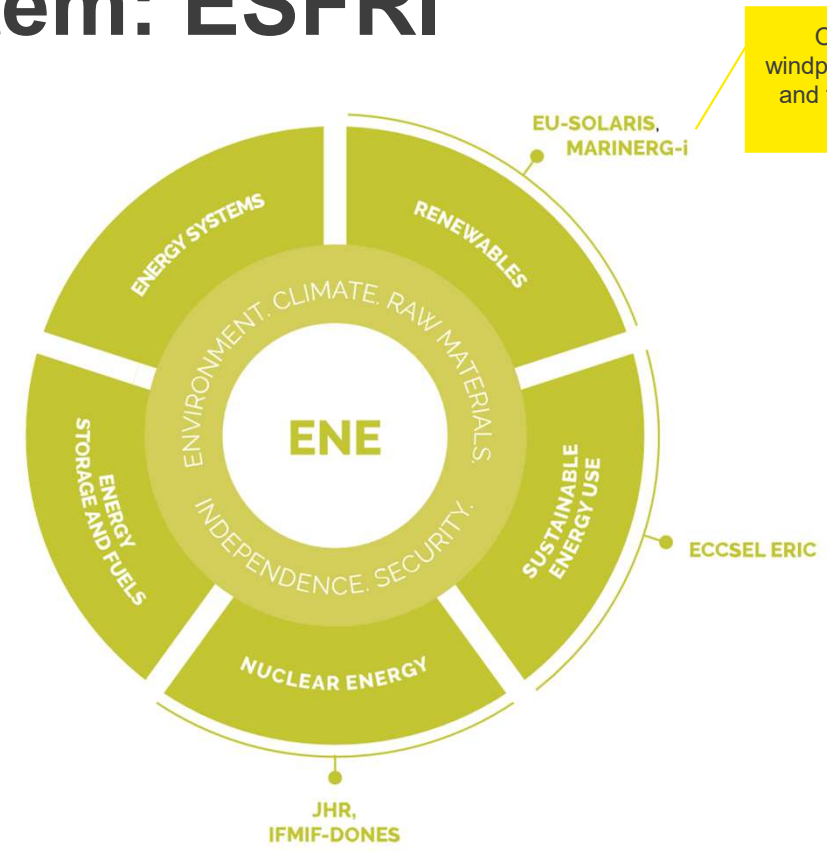
**ESFRI recognition can open access to targeted EU calls.**
**Funding requires a separate application.**
**Countries and regions provide the long-term funding base.**

Sources: European Commission, Horizon Europe RI Work Programme 2026–2027 and CORDIS. Call-specific conditions apply.

# European RI Ecosystem: ESFRI

## Landscape analysis 2024

- → Framework and rationale for the Roadmap
- → ESFRI RI's Portfolio (online)
- → 6 Scientific domains (& cross-over analysis)
  - → Data, Computing & Digital RI
  - → **Energy**
  - → Environment
  - → Health & Food
  - → Physical sciences & Engineering
  - → Social Sciences & Humanities




## Roadmap 2026

→ To be published 2.12.2026

# European RI Ecosystem
# ESFRI Roadmap procedure

## New RI proposals and major upgrades: the Roadmap 2026 route

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Preparation** | Develop the scientific case and consortium.<br>Seek political support via national delegates. |
| 2 | **Submission** | Submit through ESFRI MoS+.<br>Follow European and national requirements. |
| 3 | **Evaluation** | Strategy Working Groups assess the science and pan-European relevance of the proposal. |
| 4 | **Hearing** | Address critical questions from the review.<br>Present the proposal at the hearing. |
| 5 | **Forum decision** | The Forum decides which proposals to include in the ESFRI Roadmap. |
| 6 | **Roadmap inclusion** | Selected projects enter the Roadmap.<br>ESFRI follows implementation progress. |

Sources: ESFRI Roadmap 2026 Public Guide, official FAQ and InfoDay materials. New-proposal route only.

# European RI Ecosystem
# ESFRI Project to Landmark

## Landmark status requires proven maturity and an ESFRI decision

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | **ESFRI Project** | A strong scientific case in the preparation phase.<br>The project works towards implementation. |
| 2 | **Implementation** | Reach advanced implementation or operation.<br>Set a clear schedule for starting user services. |
| 3 | **ESFRI review** | Demonstrate scientific quality and progress.<br>ESFRI assesses the project's maturity. |
| 4 | **Forum decision** | ESFRI decides on the status upgrade.<br>Project status does not convert automatically. |
| 5 | **ESFRI Landmark** | Deliver services and user access, or complete advanced construction towards operation. |
| 6 | **Monitoring** | ESFRI continues to monitor Landmark quality.<br>Long-term support and sustainability remain vital. |

Sources: ESFRI RI Portfolio, Roadmap 2026 and Landmark monitoring guidance. Schematic overview.

# European RI Ecosystem: Legal Framework (ERIC, …)

## Role of an ERIC

A European legal entity to establish and operate a shared research infrastructure.

## Members' commitments

Members agree on governance and their financial contributions. Countries and regions underpin long-term investment and operation.

## Establishment procedure

**1. Agreement between future members**

Agree the statutes, seat and governance, including members' financial commitments.

**2. Application and Commission assessment**

Submit the dossier. The Commission checks compliance with the ERIC legal framework.

**3. Commission establishment decision**

The ERIC acquires legal personality when the Commission decision takes effect.

**ESFRI provides strategic recognition. ERIC provides a legal structure*.**
**Horizon Europe funding requires a separate application.**
**ERIC status gives neither automatic Landmark status nor EU funding.**

* ERIC is one possible legal form. Alternatives include an intergovernmental organisation or a company under national law.

# 3.
# Case: MARINERG-I

# Support MARINERG-i-ERIC

**2026 Political support ERIC-application**

**2028 (MARINERG-I ERIC)**

ERIC establishment

**2027 (€ 1.499.995)**

**HORIZON-INFRA-2025-01**

**MARINERG-i_IMP** — Implementation Phase

**2028-2032 (€ 40.000 (annual))**

Membership fees (Belgium/Flanders)

# 4.
# Current & future developments

# Recall that…

Relatively few ESFRI-RI's in the energy domain:

- → "Many potential energy RI's do not fit optimally with the current ESFRI concept, due to intimate interactions with the commercial/industrial sector."
- → "The distinction between RI & TI is not applicable in the energy field."
- → "Infrastructures in the field should include several TRL's (Technological Readiness Levels) and should not only cover basic research"
- → "A vigorous program to encourage the establishment of new RI's and TI's should be considered to remediate existing needs."
- → Private Public Parterships (PPP): an agreement between RI & Industry, Joint Undertaking (JU), European Technology Platforms (ETP's), Contractual Public-Private Partnerships (CPPP's), Milestone-based PPP)

Source: ESFRI Landscape Analysis 2024

# EU Strategy for RI and TI (sept. ‘25)

“*The strategy’s overarching objective is to **ensure that scientists, researchers, innovators, inventors, and industry in Europe have at their disposal easily accessible, cutting-edge facilities, high-quality data and tailored services** that drive scientific and technological excellence, industrial competitiveness and well-being of people.*”

Objectives:

1. strengthening the European **ecosystem** of research and technology infrastructures through a holistic approach to capacity building and mobilising investments, improving the alignment of user needs and available facilities and services
2. bolstering the **accessibility** of research and technology infrastructures as a continuum of complementary services for researchers and innovative companies, including startups and scaleups
3. attracting and cultivating **talent** in Europe
4. improving and simplifying the **governance** framework for research and technology infrastructures
5. improving the **international** dimension and **resilience** of research and technology infrastructures

“*Implementing the strategy would boost European infrastructure capacities through increased investments and new funding models, new infrastructure technology developments, adoption of digital technologies and AI, and boosting skills. It will improve, secure and harmonise access to infrastructure services, strengthen governance, and strengthen their international dimension, including achieving critical data sovereignty, while protecting European assets.*”

→ 22 ACTIONS



Source: European Commission, European Strategy on Research and Technology Infrastructures (2025).

# Key elements

1. Governance
2. Funding
3. Acces

# Governance

- The existing ESFRI governance framework for RI, with room for improvement, and the question: is this applicable for TI?
  - State aid rules
  - Flexibility
  - …

- A lack of governance for TI

→ Ongoing discussions

# Funding: Horizon Europe 2028–2034: proposed structure

Commission proposal (July 2025) EUR 175 billion proposed for 2028–2034

**European Competitiveness Fund (ECF)**

Same four strategic areas

Separate, linked EU fund
Support for scale-up and deployment

| **Pillar I EXCELLENT SCIENCE** | **Pillar II COMPETITIVENESS AND SOCIETY** | **Pillar III INNOVATION** |
|---|---|---|
| European Research Council (ERC) | COMPETITIVENESS[1]<br>Clean transition and industrial decarbonisation<br>Health, biotech, agriculture and bioeconomy<br>Digital leadership<br>Resilience and security, defence industry and space | European Innovation Council (EIC) |
| Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions | SOCIETY<br>Global societal challenges<br>EU Missions and New European Bauhaus Facility | Innovation ecosystems and the knowledge triangle |
| Science for EU policies (Joint Research Centre) | | |

**Pillar IV EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ERA policies | **Research and technology infrastructures** | Widening participation and spreading excellence |

[1] Pillar II competitiveness aligns with the ECF's four strategic areas. RI/TI remain in Pillar IV. EC proposals (2025), subject to negotiations.

# Funding

## FP10: funding for RI and TI

7 October 2026 · Latest verified legislative update: 20 September 2026

### Proposed funding architecture

RI and TI together under Pillar IV “European Research Area” in the Commission’s FP10 proposal.

€16.3bn proposed for all of Pillar IV, including ERA policies and widening. This is not an RI/TI-only budget.

Strategy priorities: new capacities, coordinated investment and better access to facilities and services.

### Negotiations and open choices

Council agreed a partial position in June 2026, excluding budget matters. Parliament’s work remains ongoing.

Overall FP10 budget still contested: Commission: €175bn. Parliament’s Budget Committee supports €200bn.

Key open issues: final RI/TI allocation and the funding interface with the European Competitiveness Fund.

**RI and TI have an explicit place in FP10. Final funding commitments remain open.**

Sources: European Commission (2025), Council (26 June 2026), European Parliament (20 September 2026).

# Horizon Europe Work Program 2026-2027

**BRIDGING-2027-03-04:** Secures long-term data resilience and sovereignty in life sciences.

**BRIDGING-2027-03-06:** Direct funding for **industry** to **access** infrastructure services and solve R&I bottlenecks.

**BRIDGING-2027-03-07:** Positions European RIs and TIs as global magnets to attract top talent (*Choose Europe*).

# Horizon Europe Work Program 2026-2027

**INFRADEV (Upgrades & Sustainability):** Focuses on long-term sustainability and major upgrades of existing pan-European facilities.

- *Key Call:* HORIZON-INFRA-2026-DEV-01-01 (Major technical upgrades).

**INFRASERV (Transnational Access):** Funds open **access** to facilities for health, climate, and digital research.

- *Note:* **Simplified cascade funding makes it easier to welcome external and industrial users**.

**INFRATECH (Next-Gen Tools & Industry):** It funds the co-creation of advanced instruments and software *together* with industrial partners.

**INFRAEOSC & INFRANET (Data Highways):** Drives the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) and FAIR data sharing.

# Access

## Charter of access for industrial users to RI and TI

European Commission, 28 July 2026

**6 key principles,** designed to improve the access conditions for businesses to RI and TI:

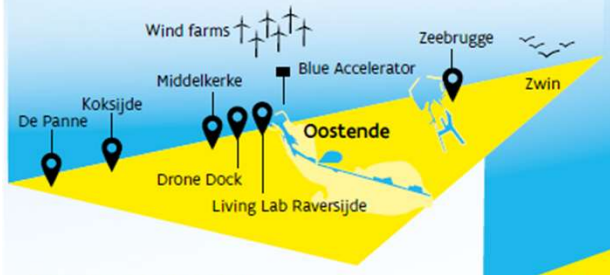
- Increased visibility and availability of services
- Transparency and quality of services
- Simplified contract and agreement procedures
- Safe intellectual property management
- Tailored support to companies
-Cooperation between infrastructures and access to data

→Research and technology infrastructures are invited to endorse the Charter **here !**

Source: European Commission, Charter of access, OJ C/2026/4100, 28 July 2026.

# Ostend Maritime Hub

A local ecosystem with a high density of innovative businesses, cluster organisations, research institutions and public authorities collaborating intensively together for impact ranging from the local to the international level.




**Blue Economy actors in Ostend**

- Knowledge and research institutions - test sites
- Government and public authorities
- Industry & commercial
- Other

Blue Accelerator: test and demonstration platform
Marine Station Ostend incl. Marine Robotics Centre
Duin voor Dijk
InnovOcean Campus
Kusterfgoed
Agency for Maritime and Services and Coast
Territorial Development Coast/Province West - Flanders, VLIZ, ILVO, EMB, JPI Oceans, EMODnet, IODE
Rederscentrale
Marifish.Inc
De Oesterput
Port of Oostende
RBINS (Management of the marine environment)
Living Lab Raversijde
Maritiem Instituut Mercator - Oostende
Drone Dock
Ostend Science Park
Flanders Maritime Laboratory
Bluebridge Incubator & Innovation Center
Blue Cluster
POM WVL
Innovative business specialised in network infrastructure
VITO
Water Climate Hub
The Reef Digital Training Lab
Blue Energy
Innovative business focusing on marine surveys and offshore renewable support activities
Marine@UGent Core Facility
Belgian Offshore Cluster

## OSTEND SCIENCE PARK

A deep tech knowledge hub fueled by Ghent University and supported by Port Oostende and POM West-Vlaanderen, entirely dedicated to marine and maritime research and business. It is the perfect breeding ground to further boost and expand blue innovative businesses and organisations. Research institutions and facilities, public authorities and cluster organisations and businesses - all specialised in blue economy - are closely working together in a vibrant blue community excelling in e.g. offshore wind, maritime safety and surveys.

**Bluebridge** - based at Ostend Science Park - is the hub for blue economy related events, training activities, co-working and office rent in our region. Blue Cluster, Belgian Offshore Cluster and the Provincial Development Agency's Blue Energy team, Marine@Ugent and businesses are operating from this innovative blue hub. The Reef-Training Lab Blue Energy attracts students with its state-of-the-art infrastructure to prepare the workforce for the future.

## INNOVOCEAN CAMPUS

Hosts the UNESCO/IOC Project Office for International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange (IODE), European Marine Board (EMB), European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODNet), Joint Programming Initiative Healthy and Productive Seas and Oceans (JPI Oceans), Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ), Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (ILVO), Province of West-Flanders Streekhuis Kust and the Coastal Heritage Unit. Physical proximity contributes to fruitful formal and informal exchanges between regional and international organisations. A concrete example is the provision of EMODNet data by VLIZ to The Reef-Training Lab Blue Energy.

## MARIFISH.INC

Promotes innovative concepts, start-ups and scale-ups in aquaculture and mariculture and supports the transformation of traditional fisheries by providing housing, coaching and community services. This on- and offshore incubator and living lab – and in particular the entrepreneurs they serve – receives scientific technical advice from researchers at Ghent University, VLIZ and ILVO. For coaching services, they can count on the expertise of the Flanders Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VOKA).

## BLUE ECONOMY SCIENCE SUMMIT

A recurring event, co-organised by Blue Cluster and VLIZ, where entrepreneurs and scientists are challenged to collaborate on key marine and maritime topics and jointly develop solutions. The goal is to enhance cooperation and develop a shared vision and strategy for the future of the blue economy.

Source: Gearing up our blue knowledge - Tackling ocean challenges in the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030 – 2025 edition – p. 19

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