

PRESS INFORMATION– 2024

## **ELBE Eurocluster: a European scheme for SMEs in the MRE sector**

*The Pôle Mer Méditerranée, accredited as a world-class competitiveness cluster by the French government since 2005, works for the sustainable development of the maritime and coastal economy all around the world and especially in the Mediterranean basin.*

*As a long-standing partner of the EnerGaia Forum to be held on December 11 and 12, 2024 at the Parc des Expositions in Montpellier, the Pôle Mer Méditerranée looks back at “ELBE Eurocluster”, a European scheme for SMEs in the MRE sector.*

### **Context**

The marine renewable energies (MRE) sector is highly competitive and requires players to ensure their competitiveness through various levers, such as the development of cutting-edge technologies to meet the needs of the various offshore energy park projects, access to new growing markets, and training to maintain the skills needed to keep pace with market evolutions.

In this context, to support industry players in their development and/or maintenance of their competitiveness, the European Union offers a variety of funding opportunities through various schemes. These funding opportunities can sometimes be perceived as difficult to access by industry players, particularly very small businesses, due to the complexity of the applications, the administrative burden, and the difficulty of joining a European consortium.

### **ELBE Alliance**



In 2016, based on the observation that it was difficult to introduce foreign markets and to access European fundings, European clusters from MRE field formed a strategic partnership: the ELBE Alliance.

This alliance brings together eight leading European clusters in the MRE sector, including the Pôle Mer Méditerranée, bringing together nearly 1,000 companies and R&D organizations.

Through participation in a European project called ELBE +, the Alliance has supported and strengthened the internationalization of European SMEs and other stakeholders in selected offshore renewable energy markets in North America (USA, Canada) and Asia (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan), while identifying potential new markets for future activities.

In 2022, Alliance members became a “Eurocluster”, an initiative that has provided a budget of over one million euros to the Alliance, in order to support the development of SMEs from the sector. This budget is distributed as 'cascade funding' to SMEs that succeed in the various 'open calls.' These calls, organized and managed by Alliance members, aim to support the winning SMEs in their innovation and internationalization efforts, as well as provide assistance with networking and training needs.

## The actions carried out

Within the framework of this Eurocluster and over the period 2022-2025, the ELBE Alliance has been able to carry out several actions:

- 8 collaborative innovation projects based on challenges defined in coordination with European MRE players. Cascade funding budget for these projects is made of €60,000.
- 31 individual innovation services enabling an SME to finance access to test sites, market intelligence, internationalization, technology transfer or technical expertise, up to a maximum of €10,000.
- International sales missions in strategic offshore renewable energy markets such as South Korea, the UK, the USA, Australia, Japan and Brazil, up to a maximum of €3,000 per mission.
- Training sessions to help SMEs to integrate sustainability elements into their business model, up to €13,500 per SME.
- Various networking events at major MRE-related conferences and trade fairs in ELBE Alliance regions (FOWT 2023, WindEurope 2024, etc.).

## 87 European SMEs supported

The benefits of this alliance are numerous for SMEs, as it not only provides financial support for the development of their innovations and their business, but also gives them access to a European network that will make it easier for them to access new markets and European funding by integrating European research and innovation projects.

ELBE Eurocluster has supported a total of 87 European SMEs, including some located in Occitanie:

- Among the 8 innovation projects involving 11 SMEs, 2 took place in Occitanie (projects led by ZELIN and BIO-UV Group), for a total amount of €120,000.
- Among the 31 individual innovation services funded, 4 took place in the Occitanie region (KEYSEAOBS and 3 other SMEs whose names cannot be released at present, as the beneficiaries are in the contractualization phase), for a total of €40,000.
- Among the internationalization missions organized, 1 Occitan SME, Hansen Energy Marine, received funding of €1,500 to explore the British market. A final internationalization call for interest is currently underway, which could provide funding for other SMEs in Occitanie.

## About Forum EnerGaïa

An annual event with nationwide and international reach dedicated to renewable energy industry professionals, Forum EnerGaïa has been accompanying all the sector's stakeholders for 18 years. Initiated by the Occitanie/Pyrénées-Méditerranée Regional Authority, Forum EnerGaïa is today a showcase for the actions the authority is taking to promote the energy transition and achieve its objective of becoming the first positive energy region in Europe. SPL Occitanie Events, the organiser of the Forum EnerGaïa, is committed to an eco-responsible approach. It has been ISO 20121 certified by AFNOR since January 2021 for all its activities.

## **Contacts presse**

*Pôle Mer Méditerranée*

Emmelyne BROUHANE - Communication and events manager  
[brouhane@polemermediterranee.com](mailto:brouhane@polemermediterranee.com)

*Forum EnerGaïa*

Agence Hikou - [presse.energaia@hikou.fr](mailto:presse.energaia@hikou.fr)

Marion CHANSON - 06 15 71 16 76 ou Laura TAVERNE - 06 15 59 85 76