**Theme 2 – Environmentally Sustainable Blue Growth**

*Description*

Today, Blue Growth is an important part of our economic development. All over Europe, and certainly within Belgium, industry and society are increasingly turning to the coastal region and the sea to make use of marine resources to develop innovative products and/or processes that meet our social and economic needs.

At the same time, this coastal area was already vulnerable due to historical human use, while it is also under pressure from global problems such as warming, acidification and rising sea levels.

Therefore, it is time to reconcile the desire to use more and more marine resources and space with the urgent need to conserve or enhance the natural capital of the marine environment.

*Discussion points/Concrete topics*

A. What kind of economic activities do we want to develop at sea?

B. Do these activities compete (time/space) with current economic activities?

C. Do these activities compete (time/space) with vulnerable marine areas or species?

D. What about cumulative impact assessments?

E. How could spatially combining activities lead to more innovation and economic growth and at the same time add value to the marine environment?

*Motivation*

There is a strong European interest in using marine resources for economic development, while at the same time the natural elements of the coastal zone provide important ecosystem services to society.

This theme is both multisectoral and multidisciplinary and has interfaces with: nature conservation, marine spatial planning, policy, tourism, blue economy, etc. The aim is to gain a better understanding of the needs of the different sectors and to develop an integrated vision on how to reconcile ecological, economic needs with specific attention to the economic and ecological benefits that multiple use of space can bring.