

## **COST Action CA22122 “Rethinking the Blue Economy: Socio-Ecological Impacts and Opportunities” (RethinkBlue)**

# **RethinkBlue Training Schools - Framework**

This document outlines the framework for the Training Schools arranged by the COST Action CA22122 - “Rethinking the Blue Economy: Socio-Ecological Impacts and Opportunities” (RethinkBlue).

### **1. Purpose and objectives of the Action’s Training schools**

The purpose of the Action’s Training Schools is to contribute to the Action’s goals to build competence among Action members and create opportunities for knowledge exchange and collaboration.

The Training Schools will provide a shared forum for exchange across WGs. They introduce young researchers and experts from different disciplines, sectors and countries to different perspectives, new methods and empirical insights. The aim is to inspire innovative thinking and new collaborative research projects.

#### **1.1. Types of Training Schools**

The RethinkBlue Action’s priority is to organize and fund Training Schools that are of interest across WGs. See section 3 for more information on time schedule and themes.

In addition, WGs can organize Training Schools that are specific to the theme of the particular WG (“**WG Training Schools**”). These WG Training Schools follow the general principles and framework outlined in section 2; however, the WG proposing the Training School may play a more prominent role in planning and organizing the Training School. Importantly, in line with the Action’s goal to promote knowledge exchange and capacity building across disciplines and specialities, WG training schools will be open to all RethinkBlue Action members (i.e. not only the members of a particular WG). Budget permitting, WG Training Schools are eligible to receive funding from the RethinkBlue Action.

**Combining (e.g., co-locating, co-organizing, or coordinating) RethinkBlue Training Schools with other Training Schools or events organized by third parties** may be possible depending on circumstances, and will be decided on a case-by-case basis. Local Organizers who wish to do so should carefully check the COST Annotated Rules Level C to identify potential implications of this (for instance with regard to requirements/conditions and COST funding). This should be done as early as possible, i.e. when planning the proposal to host the Training School.

## **2. Framework for Training Schools**

This section provides recommendations and practical guidelines for those involved in the planning and organization of Training Schools as part of the RethinkBlue Action, such as the Management Committee (MC), the Core Group (CG), the Local Organizers and the Training School Organizing Committee.

The framework also applies to WG Training Schools (i.e. Training Schools about WG-specific themes).

### **2.1. Format of Training Schools**

To facilitate interactions among participants and enhance learning, Training Schools will preferably be face-to-face (i.e. “in real life”).

Depending on the topic and the Training School’s pedagogical concept, the face-to-face meeting may be preceded and/or followed by online meetings.

Hybrid formats are not recommended, as experience suggests that good hybrid events are difficult to do well. Therefore, hybrid events should only be considered in exceptional cases where this is meaningful in line with the pedagogical concept, and only when the Training School Organizing Committee can be sure to be able to deliver a hybrid event of high quality.

### **2.2. Location of Training Schools**

According to COST rules, Training Schools can be organized in COST Member States, Near Neighbour Countries, or Third States, as well as virtually (Annotated Rules Level C, section 6.3.). However, institutions in Third Countries are not eligible for Local Organizer Support (Annotated Rules Level C, section 6.4.).

When selecting the location of a Training School, the following criteria should be taken into account:

- Ease and costs of travel for participants, i.e. the location should be close to a major airport hub and there should be good bus and/or train connections.
- Availability of sufficient local accommodation at reasonable cost (if possible, Local Organizers should explore the possibility to negotiate a discounted rate for participants)
- Availability of facilities required for the Training School (e.g. room for plenary session(s), seminar rooms, space for breaks / lunch, IT equipment, Wifi, etc.) at the host organization

### **2.3. Duration of Training Schools**

Typically, Training Schools are expected to last about 3-5 days where participants meet in person in a particular physical location.

The number of days and the schedule will depend on the topic and the pedagogical concept, and will be decided by the Training School Organizing Committee, within the limits of the budget allocated to the Training School. Organizers may also wish to consider to allow time for social activities and/or an excursion.

In addition, when determining the duration of the Training School, the Training School Organizing Committee should take into account the requirements (e.g., regarding hours of

classroom teaching or other activities) for awarding the desired number of ECTS points (see section 2.7. on ECTS).

Potential schedules could look like this:

- |    |               |                                     |
|----|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| A. | Mon           | Arrival day                         |
|    | Tue-Thu       | Training School activities (3 days) |
|    | Fri           | Departure day                       |
| B. | Mon           | Arrival day                         |
|    | Tue-Fri       | Training School activities (4 days) |
|    | Sat           | Departure day                       |
| C. | Sun           | Arrival day                         |
|    | Mon-Fri       | Training School activities (5 days) |
|    | Sat           | Departure day                       |
| D. | Mon morning   | Arrival                             |
|    | Mon noon      | Start of activities (4 days)        |
|    | Fri noon      | End of activities                   |
|    | Fri afternoon | Departure                           |

## **2.4. Local Organizers and Training School Organizing Committee**

### **2.4.1. Selection of Local Organizers for Training Schools**

Institutions who are interested in being “Local Organizers” and hosting a Training School express their interest by sending an email to the Core Group (CG) by the deadline (if applicable) set for expressions of interest.

The email to the CG should include two attachments: a Letter of Support from the host institution, and the completed information sheet (see Appendix to this document).

The CG will review the expressions of interest, taking into account the Action’s priorities and needs regarding training schools, as well as the expected ability of the organizers to deliver the training school successfully (as indicated by the information provided). This includes the following criteria:

- Match between the topic(s) and the Action’s priorities regarding Training School topics (see section 3.2.)
- Match between the time frame proposed and the Action’s planned schedule of activities (see section 3.1.)
- Approval from the host institution
- Realistic budget plan
- Location-related criteria, i.e. travel connections, accommodation and facilities (see section 2.2.)
- Capacity to organize the Training School successfully, e.g., number and experience / interest of local individuals able to help
- Local expertise related to Training School topics (e.g., availability of local trainers) and/or local interest in participating as trainees
- Suggestions / ideas regarding relevant trainers or members of the Training School Organizing Committee
- Other criteria related to the specifics of the Training School topic

The CG may request further information from those who expressed an interest in hosting a Training School, if/as required.

After reviewing the expressions of interest, the CG will submit a proposal to the MC, who will nominate the Local Organizer.

#### **2.4.2. COST funding for the Local Organizer**

Information on funding from the COST Action for the host institution (Local Organizer) is available in the COST Annotated Rules Level C.

Prior to offering to host a Training School, prospective organizers should carefully consult the COST rules regarding funding for Training Schools through the “Local Organizer Support” (LOS), and consider seeking additional financial support (e.g. from the host institution or other funding agencies) if/as required.

As mentioned above, it may be possible to combine Training Schools with other Action activities and/or other Training Schools or events organized by third parties. If a Local Organizer is interested in doing that, they should carefully check the COST Annotated Rules Level C to identify potential implications of this, for instance with regard to requirements and COST funding.

#### **2.4.3. Composition of the Training School Organizing Committee**

The Training School Organizing Committee is the organizing committee of a particular Training School.

The Committee includes:

- one or more representatives of the Local Organizers, i.e. the institution that has the role of the “Local Organizer” for the Training School in line with COST rules.
- individuals with expertise related to the topic of the Training School who will be responsible for planning the content of the Training School
- at least one member of the Core Group as a liaison to ensure smooth communication and support from the Core Group if/as needed

Selection of Committee members:

- Representatives of the Local Organizer are selected by the Local Organizer.
- Experts on the topics of the Training School are identified by the Core Group and the Local Organizers jointly, taking into account Action members with relevant expertise and inviting external experts if/as required.
- The CG member is selected by the CG.

When selecting the members of the Training School Organizing Committee, COST principles of Excellence and Inclusiveness must be taken into account by all involved.

#### **2.4.4. Evaluation**

The Training School Organizing Committee will arrange an evaluation of the Training School by participants at the end of the Training School.

The Training School Organizing Committee is expected to share the outcomes of this evaluation with the Core Group and the MC, together with insights and tips for the organizers of subsequent Training Schools (e.g., a list of “Tips and lessons learned”, template for application form, or other information that might be helpful).

## **2.5. Participants**

Training Schools are open to all interested members of the Action as well as others who are interested in participating.

### **2.5.1. Number of participants**

To create a good learning environment and allow interpersonal exchange among participants, in face-to-face Training Schools it is expected that the number of participants will usually be limited.

- The number of trainees will be around 20-25 individuals.
- The number of trainers will be around 4-10 individuals, depending on the number of trainees, the expertise required and the duration of the Training School.
- The exact number of trainees and trainers will be decided by the Training School Organizing Committee, depending on the topic and the pedagogical concept of the Training School, as well as the facilities available and the budget allocated to the Training School.
- Note that not all participants may receive financial support from the Action for their participation (see section 2.6. on funding).

The Action reserves the right to cancel a Training School if too few applications are received.

### **2.5.2. Selecting trainers**

Trainers will be selected by the Training School Organizing Committee, based on trainers' expertise regarding the topic of the Training School, and taking into account COST principles of Excellence and Inclusiveness.

### **2.5.3. Selecting trainees**

Information about the Training School will be shared as widely as possible, both among Action members and outside the Action through the Action's and Action members' websites, social media channels, word of mouth, etc. It is especially important to make a special effort to attract young researchers and innovators. To spread the information, the Training School Organizing Committee should collaborate closely with the Action's Science Communication team.

Interested trainees are invited to express their interest in participating by submitting an application by the deadline and in the way (e.g., by email, by completing a pdf template or through an online form) specified in the Call for applications.

Applications should include the following:

1. A letter of motivation (max 1 page)
2. A completed application form, including
  - Contact details (e-mail)
  - Institutional affiliation, country of affiliation, gender, age (YRI), career stage
  - Information on membership in WGs in the RethinkBlue Action
  - Information about participation in Action activities (e.g. task forces, Science Communication, Grant Evaluation Committee, WG activities, STSMs or conference grants, etc.)
  - A statement regarding whether applicants would have their own funding for participating, or if they would only be able to attend with funding from the Action
  - Other relevant information
3. The applicant's CV (max 2 pages)

4. Recommended: A letter of support from the applicant's WG leader/co-leader or a Core Group member that documents the applicant's active participation in the Action's WGs or other activities (e.g., task forces, organization of Action activities, etc.)
5. Any other information, as necessary for the specific Training School

Applications that are complete and that are submitted prior to the deadline will be reviewed by the Training School Organizing Committee.

Evaluation criteria:

- Interest in the Training School and relevance of the Training School for the applicant's work

When the criteria outlined above are met by more applicants than there are "places" in the Training School, priority will be given to:

- applicants who actively participate in the RethinkBlue Action (CA22122)
- connection of the applicant's work to the aim of the RethinkBlue COST Action and/or with the theme of a specific Working Group of the Action
- proposals by young researchers and innovators, women, researchers and innovators from Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITC) and researchers and innovators with disabilities
- ensuring a balance of members of different working groups

The Core Group (in consultation with the Training School Organizing Committee) reserves the right to specify additional and/or different criteria that are relevant for particular Training Schools.

The Training School Organizing Committee will present a list of suggested participants to the Core Group, who will make the decision and invite participants, in line with the powers delegated from the MC to the Core Group.

The selected participants may include trainees who are eligible for reimbursement as well as trainees who are not eligible for reimbursement (see section 2.6.); in this way, it is possible for trainees who are not eligible for funding to participate in Training Schools if they wish.

After trainees are selected, decisions about reimbursement will be made for those who are eligible to receive reimbursement (see 2.6.). In line with the powers delegated by the MC to the Core Group, this decision will be made by the Core Group, in consultation with the Training School Organizing Committee.

After this decision is made, participants will receive invitations via e-COST (see section 2.5.4.).

#### **2.5.4. e-COST invitations**

- Participants (trainers and trainees) are formally invited via the e-COST platform. The invitation will include information about the availability of financial support from the COST Action.
- Those invited should accept or decline the invitation within two weeks of receiving the invitation.
- To ensure sound financial planning, after this two-week period, the CG (in line with powers delegated by the MC) can withdraw the invitation and the participant will lose the right to claim reimbursement for participation (see COST Annotated C Level Rules, A1-2.3.2).

## 2.6. Funding for participation

According to COST rules, Action members from COST Member States and Near Neighbour Countries are eligible for financial support to cover part or all of their expenses. In addition, individuals from Third Countries who participate as trainers can receive financial support “once in the lifetime of the Action” (Annotated Rules Level C, section 6.4.).

**Trainers.** For trainers, the Action will cover costs for travel and daily allowance in line with COST rules and in line with the funding limits established by the MC as part of the Action’s annual budget.

In line with COST rules, **it is not possible to pay lecture fees/honoraria to trainers** for their contribution to the Training School. However, the Action MC has the possibility to apply two different daily allowance rates (one for trainers and one for trainees) at Training Schools (Annotated Rules Level C, section A1-3.1.3.1.), in recognition of trainers’ extra work in preparing high quality teaching.

**Trainees.** Trainees who have been selected to participate may do so without receiving funding from the Action (see section 2.5). This includes participants who are not eligible for funding (e.g., those from Third Countries) and trainees who have their own funding.

Taking into account the budget available, as many trainees as possible will receive financial support from the Action to cover all or part of their costs for participation. Funding will be in line with COST rules and in line with the funding limits established by the MC as part of the Action’s annual budget.

## 2.7. ECTS credit for participation in Training Schools

To increase the attractiveness of the Training School for PhD students, the Training School Organizing Committee should seek to arrange the Training School so that those participants who wish can get ECTS credits for participating.

This would mean that the Training School may need to fulfill certain requirements. This may include specifying:

- learning goals
- number of hours taught
- forms of teaching
- syllabus and reading list

Some relevant resources can be found here:

<https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/inclusive-and-connected-higher-education/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system>

## 2.8. Training School materials

As far as possible, lectures and other teaching materials (e.g., lecture slides) that form part of a Training School will be shared on the Action’s website, if the presenter gives permission for that and if this does not infringe copyright. This will be arranged by the Training School Organizing Committee, together with the Action’s Science Communication Officer.

## 2.9. Outputs of Training Schools

Whenever the topic allows, Training Schools should be planned from the start so that they lead to a meaningful output. For instance, the work during the Training School may lay the foundation for a joint publication, a policy brief, dissemination materials directed at stakeholders, etc.

## 3. Training Schools in Years 2-3

This section describes plans and recommendations concerning Training Schools across WGs that are prioritized based on the Action's goals and the Memorandum of Understanding, and a survey among Action members concerning their interests.

Additional Training Schools (incl. WG Training Schools that focus specifically on the topic of a particular WG) may be added if there is sufficient interest and budget available.

### 3.1. Timing

Training Schools are primarily planned for Years 2 and 3 of the Action, taking into account other planned activities (i.e. the mid-term conference). In addition, with a view to reduce expenses, if possible the Training Schools should take place outside of the main tourist season.

Year 2 (Nov 2024-Oct 2025)

- 1 Training School in winter (e.g., around January-March)
- 1 Training School in late spring/early summer (e.g., around April-June)

Year 3 (Nov 2025-Oct 2026)

- 1-2 Training Schools (depending on budget available) directly before/after the mid term conference

### 3.2. Topics for Training Schools

The Training Schools will provide a shared forum for exchange across WGs. Therefore, it is important that Training School topics are of interest to potential participants across the Action's WGs.

Based on a survey among Action members in spring 2024, as well as feedback from CG and MC members, it is recommended that each Training School combines a method topic and a thematic focus that is of interest to participants across the Action's WGs.

**Method-related topics.** The table shows method-related topics that were of high interest to Action participants (based on survey responses in spring 2024) and that are in line with the Action's goals. **These topics will be given high priority.**

Topic	Suggested Year
Policy analysis (potentially combined with impact assessment and/or writing policy briefs)	Year 2
Collaborative methods for data collection and data analysis	Year 2
Dissemination and impact: Engaging with different audiences	Year 3



*Thematic foci.* Thematic foci for Training Schools should be sufficiently broad, or allow sufficient flexibility to be of interest / relevance for Action members across WGs.

Examples could be:

- “Conflicts and cooperation” (or “Transboundary cooperation and conflict”)
- “Blue Justice”
- Gender
- “Rethinking the Blue Economy”
- “Steps towards achieving sustainability”

Example for how method and thematic focus could be combined:

- Policy analysis could be combined with a thematic focus on “Blue Justice”. The Training School could introduce policy analysis (as a method) as well as theoretical and empirical work on Blue Justice. Participants could then work in sub-groups to analyze a set of policies relevant to their interests (e.g., maritime occupations, port cities, etc.) from a justice perspective.

### **3.2.1. Expression of Interest**

In their Expression of Interest, prospective Local Organizers propose a topic for the Training School they wish to host. In doing so, they should

- select **one method from the list above** (i.e., policy analysis, collaborative methods or dissemination/impact)
- AND combine this method with **a thematic focus that is relevant across WGs**. The thematic focus can be proposed by the Local Organizers, however, it is important that the thematic focus is relevant across WGs. The thematic foci listed above reflect topics mentioned by Action members, and could be an inspiration.

## Appendix

### Expression of Interest for hosting a Training School as “Local Organizer”

Please attach the completed form, together with a Letter of Support from the host institution, to your email with your expression of interest.

<p><b>1. Topic of the Training School that you are offering to host (see section 3.2). This should include 1 method-related topic and 1 thematic foci.</b></p>
<p><b>2. Potential dates for the Training School (e.g., which month and year)</b></p>
<p><b>3. Name &amp; address of the hosting institution</b></p>
<p><b>4. Information about the local team / research group (e.g., number of RethinkBlue Action members who could help with organization; number of local researchers / stakeholders who might participate as trainers or as trainees; information about the group’s experience with organizing training schools or conferences, etc.)</b></p>
<p><b>5. Approval of the Training School by the host institution</b> <b>Note: Include Letter of support from host institution as attachment. This should confirm that the Training School can take place at the institution’s facilities as suggested in the proposal, and receive technical support (e.g. IT) if/as required.</b></p>
<p><b>6. Information on travel connections (train, plane, bus)</b></p>
<p><b>7. Information about the availability and cost of local accommodation close to the Training School venue. Organizers should consider the possibility of arranging accommodation for Training School participants at a discounted rate.</b></p>
<p><b>8. Facilities available for the Training School, such as rooms for plenary sessions and meetings in smaller groups, IT support, Wifi/Internet, etc.</b></p>

**9. Suggestion of for members of the Training School Organizing Committee (representatives of Local Organizers; suggestions for experts)**

**10. Budget & plans for additional funding for costs that are not covered by the lump sum from the RethinkBlue Action (see section 2.4.2.)**

**11. If relevant: information on combination of the Training School with other events (see section 2.4.2.)**

**12. Other comments or information that might be relevant**