

Blue Economy Business Awards 2016

Opening speech by João Aguiar Machado,
Director-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, European Commission

Dear Finalists,

Dear Members of the Jury,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

It is a great honour and privilege for me to be here with you this evening and to open the very first edition of the Blue Economy Business Awards.

And I would like to start by turning to our finalists and quite simply saying: congratulations! We have received applications from 11 different countries, so whether you win or not, you should be very proud to have come so far.

You are the living proof that the maritime economy offers great opportunities to the benefits of our society.

As the world's population continues to increase and the natural resources on land become scarce, more and more people are turning to the ocean to provide us with energy, food and other resources. It is up to us to use them responsibly and sustainably and to avoid some of the mistakes we made on land!

That is why we are here tonight: to celebrate and honour those who are bringing sustainable innovation to our seas and oceans. In the next hours we will highlight and honour a few of those success stories. Stories of people and organisations that have created and shared exciting new knowledge. That have championed new technologies. And stories of research and projects results that have left the lab and are proving to be of real, practical use in the blue economy.

We will also celebrate the diversity of the blue economy by honouring the first "Woman of the Year in the Blue Economy" and the first "Rising Star of the Year in the Blue Economy". Women and young entrepreneurs are an enormous source of creativity, enthusiasm, and inspiration. We greatly need their talent!

So, dear finalists, you will be our best ambassadors to promote the blue economy and the blue economy business awards in Europe.

I hope that we can count on you to spread the word back home, so that we receive even more applications for the second edition of the awards at the Blue Economy Business & Science Forum next year!

Thank you for your attention and good luck!