



DIH INNOVAMARE PROJECT

D.2.2.1 One developed questionnaire



Project identification**Project ID:** ITHR0200416**Name of the lead partner organization:** Hrvatska gospodarska komora**Name of the lead partner organization in English:** Croatian Chamber of Economy**Project title:** Cross-border digital innovation Hub for innovative marine technology**Project acronym:** DIH InnovaMare**Program priority:** Sustainable growth in the blue economy**Specific objective 1.1.:** Developed pilot program for cross-border mobility of researchers for stronger applied research by collaboration with quadruple helix actors in marine tech and blue economy on cross-border level**Project duration in months:** 30**Work package:** WP2 Innovation network for the development of innovative marine technologies for the sustainable blue economy**Activity title:** Cross-border pilot program/model for talented young researchers to encourage collaborative RDI**Expected date:** Period 4**Activity description:** This model should be sustainable because it is based on needs of companies on one side and offer of expertise of young researchers. Needs of companies will be detected with survey conducted on 30 companies. Idea of mentors that are coming from companies is to bring practical knowledge and challenges that companies are facing so it can help young researchers to open cooperation with companies on specific challenges and activities. Mentoring sessions will be held based on the capabilities of mentors. We will organize 20 mentoring session that will be organized online and onsite. This pilot model will give us insight and understanding on how the process of detecting needs and young researchers who are fitting to those needs is implemented. Model will be developed as potential service of DIH Innovamare for companies and scientific-research institutions for matching and collaboration. Responsible partners are CCE and ISMAR.**Partner responsible:** CCE**Dissemination level:** CO-Confidential**Status:** Final**Version:** V1**Date:** 31.01.2026.

Executive summary

Deliverable D.2.2.1 presents the development of a structured questionnaire designed to support mentoring and collaboration between companies and young researchers in the blue economy within the DIH InnovaMare project. The questionnaire is the result of mentoring activities already implemented and reflects practical experience gained through direct interaction between industry and research stakeholders.

The model is sustainable as it is based on a dual approach: identifying the real needs of companies and mapping the expertise and research interests of young researchers. Company needs are identified through a survey conducted among 30 companies, while mentors from companies contribute practical knowledge and real-life challenges, enabling young researchers to engage with concrete industry problems.

To ensure effective matching, DIH InnovaMare developed separate invitations and questionnaire pathways for mentoring companies and young researchers. Dissemination was carried out through multiple channels, including project social media, the project website, the Map of Excellence, and direct outreach through the partnership consortium in Croatia and Italy. The questionnaire serves as both a diagnostic and matchmaking tool, laying the foundation for targeted mentoring and sustainable cooperation in the blue economy.

1. Introduction

The DIH InnovaMare project aims to foster meaningful and sustainable collaboration between companies and young researchers operating in the blue economy. A key prerequisite for effective mentoring and cooperation is a clear understanding of industry challenges and the availability of relevant research expertise.

Based on experience gained during the implementation of mentoring sessions, DIH InnovaMare developed a structured questionnaire to systematically capture company needs and researcher competencies. This approach enables targeted matching between mentors and mentees, ensuring that mentoring activities are needs-driven, practical, and outcome-oriented.

Companies participating as mentors bring applied knowledge and concrete challenges from their operational environment, while young researchers contribute scientific expertise and innovative approaches. To support this process, distinct invitations were designed for companies and young researchers, clearly defining roles and expectations, and facilitating optimal alignment between challenges and expertise.



The questionnaire and invitations were disseminated through a multi-channel communication strategy, including online platforms and direct engagement via the project partnership in Croatia and Italy, ensuring broad participation and cross-border representation.

2. Background and Rationale

The DIH InnovaMare project aims to strengthen cooperation between companies and young researchers in the blue economy by facilitating practical, innovation-oriented mentoring and collaboration. A key challenge identified was the absence of a systematic mechanism to capture both industry needs and research capabilities in a comparable and structured way.

To address this gap, DIH InnovaMare developed a dedicated questionnaire that functions not only as a data collection instrument, but also as a matchmaking and collaboration-enabling tool, supporting the preparation of focused mentoring activities.

3. Objectives of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed to:

1. Identify innovation challenges, development priorities, and research needs of companies and institutions in the blue economy.
2. Map competencies, research interests, and methodological expertise of young researchers.
3. Enable targeted matching between mentors and mentees based on complementary needs and skills.
4. Support the design of mentoring sessions that are practical, relevant, and outcome oriented.

4. Methodological Approach

The questionnaire applies a mixed-method approach, combining structured questions for comparability and open-ended questions to capture qualitative insights. This approach allows participants to clearly articulate their expectations, challenges, and collaboration interests while enabling systematic analysis and matching.

5. Target Groups and Tailored Invitations

5.1 Mentors – Companies and Institutions

Companies and institutions are invited as mentors based on their experience and role as good practice examples in the blue economy. Through the questionnaire, mentors:



- present their core expertise and activities,
- define concrete innovation or research challenges,
- express interest in mentoring and collaboration formats.

Their contribution ensures that mentoring sessions focus on real-world challenges with innovation and application potential.

5.2 Young Researchers

Young researchers are invited as mentees and potential collaborators. The questionnaire allows them to:

- describe their research focus and skills,
- express interest in applied research and cooperation with industry,
- identify preferred mentor profiles aligned with their expertise.

This approach promotes active engagement and mutual benefit.

6. Questionnaire Structure and Illustrative Examples

The questionnaire includes the following sections:

- Personal and organisational information
- Area of expertise or research focus
- Innovation or research needs
- Expectations from mentoring and collaboration
- Preferred mentoring format (online or on-site)

Illustrative examples demonstrate how complementary needs and expertise are captured and used for matching between mentors and young researchers. Based on collected responses, DIH InnovaMare analyses alignment between company challenges and researcher expertise to form mentor–mentee pairs. This structured matching process transforms mentoring sessions into platforms for applied research, innovation development, and longer-term cooperation.

7. Conclusion

Deliverable D.2.2.1 demonstrates the strategic importance of a well-designed questionnaire as both a diagnostic and matchmaking tool. By linking company needs with researcher expertise, it lays the foundation for sustainable mentoring, applied research collaboration, and innovation in the blue economy.





The development and use of the questionnaire highlighted that:

- Needs-driven matching increases relevance and impact of mentoring sessions.
- Open-ended questions reveal unexpected collaboration opportunities.
- Clear role definition improves participant engagement.
- The model is transferable and can be replicated in other sectors or regions.

