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Cost-Benefit and Cost-Effectiveness Analysis - Plan Bleu Excel Toolkit

Plan Bleu RAC
Marseille, 2026

Note by the Secretariat

1. Purpose of this Document and Expected Outcomes

1. This document introduces the interactive Plan Bleu Excel Toolkit for Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA). **The toolkit is submitted to the Working Group for review, testing, and comments**. The primary objective is to obtain concrete country feedback regarding the tool's usability, clarity, and adaptability to national contexts. Stakeholders are invited to test the tool on a pilot measure and submit recommendations for improvements before Plan Bleu officially publishes the finalized tool online in 2026.

2. Background and Dual Analytical Approach

2. The toolkit was originally developed by Plan Bleu, in collaboration with a specialized consultant, to support regional stakeholders during the National Action Plans (NAPs 2025–2035) revision process carried out by MedPol. This initiative was fully aligned with the Ecosystem Approach, aiming to provide countries with a clear, operational framework to assess the economic impacts of pollution-reduction measures and achieve Good Environmental Status (GES). Because the tool received positive feedback for its adaptability and success in bridging scientific assessment with policymaking, its application is now being extended. It is increasingly used to evaluate other environmental interventions, particularly those related to biodiversity conservation and sustainable fisheries management, allowing decision-makers to prioritize alternative interventions on an objective basis.

3. To accommodate the diverse nature of environmental actions and data availability, the toolkit offers an economic evaluation approach known as Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA), a systematic process evaluating the total expected costs against the total expected benefits of one or more measures, expressed in monetary terms. CBA is widely adopted in environmental economics and infrastructure planning because it unifies diverse impacts—such as public health, tourism, fisheries, or climate regulation—into a single monetary metric. This standardisation makes it easier to justify major investments and compare dissimilar projects on a common basis. Ultimately, CBA helps ensure that limited public funds generate the greatest possible societal and environmental returns.

3. Scope of Application: The Five Measure Types

4. To accommodate the diverse nature of environmental actions, the toolkit includes dedicated templates (Tabs 1 to 6) pre-adapted for five main categories of measures:

- **Technical:** Physical infrastructure and technology deployment, balancing capital investments against long-term environmental gains.
- **Legal:** Establishing or updating laws and standards, helping policymakers anticipate economic and administrative impacts of new regulations.
- **Economic:** Financial tools like subsidies or taxes, used to determine the most efficient incentive structures to influence behavior.
- **Institutional:** Reforming organizations or coordination mechanisms, clarifying the costs of capacity building or new regulatory bodies.
- **Policy:** Setting strategic priorities and non-binding action plans, ensuring policy choices are grounded in transparent assessments of trade-offs.

5. The tool also includes :

- **Example Case Studies (Tabs 7 to 9)**: Hypothetical but realistic examples illustrating how to accurately fill out the templates.
- **Examples better suited to Biodiversity/Fisheries Measures (Tabs 8a and 8b)**
- **Examples better suited to Coast/Hydrography Measures (Tabs 9a and 9b)**

4. Step-by-Step Methodology and Workflow

6. It is critical to emphasize that the Toolkit is not a pre-filled database, but an interactive, blank working tool. **Each user must actively bring their own, local data to feed into the tool**. Whether evaluating costs (such as local investment, operation, and maintenance expenses) or benefits (such as ecosystem improvements and expected revenues), the dynamic calculation sheets rely entirely on the

national or project-specific data that stakeholders gather from feasibility studies, local authorities, or expert interviews.

7. To accommodate the diverse nature of environmental actions, the toolkit includes dedicated, blank templates (Tabs 1 to 6) pre-adapted for five main categories of measures. Applying the tool to these distinct categories allows policymakers to anticipate diverse impacts:

- **Technical Measures:** These involve physical infrastructure and technology deployment. The tool helps balance upfront capital investments against long-term environmental gains. *For example, CBA can be used to compare decentralized versus centralized wastewater treatment facilities, proving that smaller, modular units are more cost-efficient for rural areas*.
- **Legal Measures:** These focus on establishing or updating laws, regulations, and binding standards. Using the tool helps policymakers anticipate the economic and administrative impacts of enforcing new regulations against long-term risk reductions. *For example, stricter fishing regulations may cost €5 million annually to enforce, but the tool can reveal that the recovery of fish stocks generates ecological and economic benefits surpassing €10 million over a decade*.
- **Economic Measures:** These utilize financial tools like subsidies, taxes, or market-based incentives to influence behavior. The tool helps determine the most efficient incentive structures to maximize environmental outcomes while minimizing public expenditure. *For example, an economic evaluation can help identify which aquaculture techniques generate the lowest nutrient discharge per euro of public subsidy*.
- **Institutional Measures:** These involve creating, reforming, or strengthening organizations and coordination mechanisms. The tool clarifies the costs of capacity building, training, or establishing new regulatory bodies against their expected effectiveness. *For example, an analysis of a pilot in can demonstrate that transitioning from centralized marine protected area (MPA) governance to community-based co-management improves cost-efficiency*.
- **Policy Measures:** These relate to setting strategic priorities, strategies, and non-binding action plans. The tool ensures policy choices are grounded in transparent assessments of expected impacts and trade-offs, helping set realistic targets. *For example, a country can use CBA to compare three marine litter reduction strategies (economic incentives vs. public campaigns vs. bans), proving which is the most cost-effective approach*.

Example Case Studies and Guidance (Tabs 7 to 9)

8. Because users must input their own localized data, the tool provides comprehensive guidance to help them structure their inputs accurately. The Excel file includes several hypothetical but highly realistic examples illustrating exactly how to fill out the templates and what proxies to use if specific data is missing:

- **Tabs 7a to 7c:** Provide general step-by-step examples of CBA applied to a Technical measure (expanding sewage networks), an Institutional measure (capacity building for utility companies), and a Policy measure (creating a coastal urban park).
- **Tabs 8a and 8b:** Provide examples specifically suited to **Biodiversity and Fisheries Measures**, demonstrating how to monetize complex ecological data.
- **Tabs 9a and 9b:** Provide examples specifically suited to **Coast and Hydrography Measures**.

5. Access to the Toolkit

9. To ensure proper use and access to its full functionalities, please access the interactive file via the link:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ett2vQ9fp83ohUxmOiIOT6POV9-1U4eD/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=106868374783472072994&rtpof=true&sd=true