



Lisbon Ocean Professionals Network Blue Carbon & Natural Capital of the Ocean December 12, 2025 Miguel Roque, Blue Economy Youth Ambassador, Portugal

It was an honor to attend the Lisbon Ocean Professionals Network's Blue Carbon & Natural Capital of the Ocean. It was a fascinating experience and my first real step into the world of blue finance. While I was familiar with its core concepts, I did not expect to be challenged by discussions of such depth and complexity, led by speakers who are clearly at the forefront of this rapidly evolving field.

One of the most interesting takeaways came from how my own expectations were quietly challenged. In preparation for the event, I had spent time researching the speakers and their work, which made the discussions even more impactful. I initially assumed that this blue finance event would focus mainly on projects designed to generate carbon credits to offset corporate emissions. Instead, I quickly realized that this common perception is already somewhat outdated.

What emerged instead was a much more mature and forward-looking approach: Blue Finance should not just be about designing projects for carbon credits, but about creating initiatives that genuinely restore, protect, and activate marine ecosystems. From this perspective, carbon credits emerge almost as a by-product, a consequence of a successful ecological intervention rather than its primary objective. This shift in mindset was powerful. It reframed blue finance not as a compensatory mechanism, but as a regenerative one, where ecological health comes first and financial instruments exist to support and scale that impact.

This realization also made me reflect on the importance of public perception. If the general public became more aware of this regenerative vision of blue finance, it could unlock enormous potential. Greater awareness and understanding could engage individuals and communities, opening the door to new funding pathways such as crowdfunding and collective investment, and helping many impactful projects move from concept to reality. The opportunity to accelerate blue finance by connecting people directly to ocean regeneration is immense.

Another highlight of the evening was seeing how perspectives from science, finance, investment, and sustainability come together to build these business models. Despite coming from very different professional backgrounds, the speakers' insights complemented each other, reinforcing the idea that cross-sector collaboration is essential for meaningful and scalable ocean action.

A particularly valuable insight came from Pierre Rousseau's intervention and the projects within his portfolio. When asked what kind of projects he would recommend investing in, his answer was clear and pragmatic: start by understanding the audience and defining a strong product. With a solid, well-designed product at the core, financial models can then be built around it to make projects viable and attractive to investors. This perspective highlighted the importance of clarity, storytelling, and real-world applicability in bridging the gap between science and finance.

It was also fascinating to learn about the wide range of financial tools currently being developed to support ocean protection and regeneration, from blue bonds and blended finance to emerging credit markets and nature-based investment models. An important point raised during the discussions was the need to diversify financial

mechanisms. Traditional banking systems tend to be conservative and slow-moving, which makes diversification essential. Philanthropy, for example, plays a critical role, as it is often more willing to invest in innovative and higher-risk solutions, even when proof and immediate returns are still emerging.

These mechanisms reflect a global sector in rapid evolution and one where Portugal is positioning itself strategically and with vision. There was a shared sense of optimism in the room that Portugal is laying the foundations to become a key player in blue finance, particularly within the European context, by aligning scientific knowledge, investment readiness, and long-term sustainability goals.

While the event took place at the Vasco da Gama Aquarium and Marine Carbon Capture Laboratory, the focus remained fully on the discussions and exchanges around blue carbon and natural capital. The enthusiasm in the room from both speakers and participants made it clear that this topic resonates deeply and is gaining momentum.

From a personal perspective, this event felt like a call to action. As a young person, it gave me genuine hope for the future. It showed that if Portugal succeeds in integrating these innovative financial tools and engaging the public in meaningful ways, my generation can play an active role in building the country's blue economy.

At the same time, it became clear that Portugal is positioning itself so well that, if Portuguese youth do not step forward to seize these opportunities, someone else will. There is an empty seat waiting to be filled. We should take advantage of this moment, contribute with our skills, creativity, and ambition, and ensure that we, as a generation, are the ones who shape and benefit from the blue future we are helping to build.

