

# WEST AFRICA SUSTAINABLE OCEAN PROGRAMME

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## **Call for Applications for the Recruitment of Members of the Interuniversity Scientific Committee (CSI) of the WASOP Project.**

January 2026

## 1. WASOP Project Presentation

The West Africa Sustainable Ocean Program (WASOP) is a regional initiative aimed at promoting sustainable, integrated, and coordinated management of marine and coastal resources across 13 West African countries. Designed to address the growing challenges of governance, climate resilience, and inclusive growth in West Africa, the program is based on three complementary pillars. Pillar 1, Ocean Governance, seeks to strengthen policy and regulatory frameworks, support the fight against illegal fishing, improve the quality of scientific advice, and consolidate cooperation among national and regional institutions. Pillar 2, Sustainable Blue Economy, supports the development of regional and national strategies that promote innovative, competitive, and ecosystem-respectful blue growth, while building institutional capacities and intersectoral partnerships. Pillar 3, Protection and Restoration of Marine and Coastal Ecosystems, is a key focus of the program, aiming to enhance the socio-ecological resilience of the region. This pillar aims to leverage improved scientific knowledge, develop management tools and sustainable financing mechanisms for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), promote nature-based solutions such as blue carbon, support regional MPA networks to contribute to the global 30x30 goal, and assist in the creation and strengthening of transboundary and oceanic MPAs. It also places particular emphasis on engaging local communities and scientific actors, notably through the establishment of research grants and regional consultation mechanisms. Through this integrated approach, WASOP contributes to strengthening the sustainability, stability, and prosperity of West African coastal areas, benefiting local populations, states, and marine biodiversity.

## 2. Introduction of the Ucoopia project team

**Product 1.1 of Pillar 3** is led by **Ucoopia** ([www.ucoopia.org](http://www.ucoopia.org)), the first inter-university NGO, born from the alliance between Eclasio (the NGO of the University of Liège), ULB-Coopération (the NGO of the Free University of Brussels), and the active participation of the University of Mons (UMONS). This university coalition, unique in the Belgium, mobilizes solid expertise in action research, social innovation, sustainable management of natural resources, and public policy support. Ucoopia, through its members, stands out for its long-standing commitment alongside the two groups working in the West African coastal zone (Delta Gulf of Benin Collective, 5 Deltas Collective), its involvement in integrated coastal and marine zone management in the same region, notably through the development of a strategic orientation note for GIZC and the implementation of several projects in the area (Festival Mangal, PROMAK, etc.), methodological support for various regional conservation initiatives, as well as participation in various projects focused on Marine Protected Areas, socio-ecological resilience, and territorial governance. Building on Eclasio's scientific, participatory, and community experience, combined with the operational and analytical skills of ULB-Coopération, ULB, UMONS, and the University of Liège, Ucoopia forms an integrated team capable of producing strategic tools, strengthening the capacities of stakeholders, and effectively supporting the implementation of Pillar 3 in all its scientific, ecological, and institutional dimensions.

## 3. Recruitment context for members of the Interuniversity Scientific Committee (CSI)

As part of Pillar 3 of the WASOP, the *West Africa Sustainable Ocean Program*, led by IUCN with support from **Ucoopia** and other regional partners, the implementation of Product 1.1 is dedicated to offering and managing research scholarships (master's, doctoral, post-doctoral research, and other research) to improve knowledge and management of coastal ecosystems. It is organized around an Interuniversity Scientific Committee (CSI in french) with high-level expertise. The scientific challenges related to understanding coastal dynamics, the evolution of sensitive habitats, sustainable management of Marine Protected Areas, and the restoration of socio-ecosystems require rigorous methodological guidance and coherent academic governance at the regional level. The diversity of national contexts, variability of anthropogenic pressures, complexity of ecological interactions, and the strategic importance of scientific knowledge to support public policies make it essential to mobilize a body capable of harmonizing approaches, evaluating the relevance and robustness of research projects, and ensuring that the

knowledge produced meets international standards. The launch of this call aims to establish a credible, multidisciplinary, and representative CSI capable of guiding scholars' work, strengthening regional scientific excellence, and ensuring that supported research effectively contributes to the resilience of coastal ecosystems and the consolidation of sustainable marine resource management in West Africa.

#### 4. Attributions of the Scientific Committee

The Scientific Committee's main responsibility will be to ensure the relevance, quality, and impact of the research work funded by the program, the consistency among the various research projects, while ensuring their alignment with the priority conservation and sustainable development needs identified in the region. More specifically, it will be responsible for:

- ✎ Define the priority research areas related to ecological, socio-economic, and governance issues of marine and coastal ecosystems;
- ✎ Validate grant call for proposals and establish selection criteria;
- ✎ Evaluate and select scholarship candidates (master's, doctoral, postdoctoral research) based on scientific criteria and field engagement, in accordance with principles of transparency, scientific integrity, and conflict of interest management;
- ✎ Contribute to the dissemination of results at regional and international levels by participating in dissemination events, scientific symposiums, and exchange platforms among researchers, marine protected area (MPA) managers, policymakers, and local communities;
- ✎ Support the capitalization and transfer of knowledge to public policies and MPA management strategies to turn scientific results into practical decision-making and planning tools;
- ✎ Ensure the quality, consistency, and independence of the academic supervision of scholars, with detailed procedures outlined in the Internal Regulations (ROI);
- ✎ During its first meeting, adopt an Internal Regulations (ROI) that defines operational procedures, ethical principles, validation rules, and monitoring mechanisms for academic supervision.

The committee's work will span the entire duration of the project (2026-2029), with operations based on an annual in-person meeting and virtual meetings organized as needed. The scientific secretariat will be provided by **Ucoopia**, ensuring coordination, logistics, and administrative follow-up of activities. Participation fees will be covered, although no direct compensation is planned, in accordance with the spirit of voluntary contribution and scientific commitment in service of the Sub-Region.

#### 5. Open positions and relevant profiles

The committee will be composed of Professors and researchers (with a doctorate) belonging to research institutions exclusively from the 13 West African countries, bringing together a range of expertise covering a broad disciplinary spectrum: marine ecology and biology, fisheries management, ecosystem modeling, socio-economics of natural resources, blue carbon sciences, as well as socio-anthropology of coastal dynamics. Rigorous attention will be paid to regional representation, gender balance, and disciplinary diversity. The committee will consist of 10 members, including at least four women, as well as a representative from a civil society organization (CSO) with proven experience in natural resource management and marine areas. The sought-after expertise will notably cover the following fields:

Poste	Number	Required profile
Expert in socio-economics	2	PhD or Doctorate in sociology, environmental economics, natural resource management, or a related field. 10 years of experience analyzing socio-economic dynamics related to marine ecosystems. Experience in ecosystem service assessment or conservation policies. Scientific publications in the field.

Expert in Marine Ecology and Biodiversity	1	Doctorate in marine ecology, marine biology, or an equivalent field. 10 years of experience in research on coastal ecosystems or the management of MPAs. Knowledge of ecological monitoring protocols. Experience in ecosystem modeling or marine restoration.
Forestry and Blue Carbon Expert	1	Doctorate in Forest Sciences, Biogeochemistry, or an equivalent field. Experience in the study of mangroves, carbon sinks, or compensation mechanisms. Knowledge of climate issues related to coastal ecosystems..
Biostatistics and Data Analysis Expert	1	PhD or Doctorate in biostatistics, environmental modeling, or a related field. Proficiency in quantitative analysis tools (R, Python, GIS). Experience in processing ecological or socio-economic data.
Expert in socio-anthropology of coastal communities	1	Doctorate in anthropology, sociology, or an equivalent field. Experience in studies on local knowledge, participatory governance, or conflicts related to natural resources. Fieldwork with fishing communities or protected area managers.
Expert in microbiology or marine plant biology	1	Doctorate in environmental microbiology, marine biology, or an equivalent field. Experience in the analysis of microbiological pollutants or in marine microorganism ecology.
Expert in environmental policies and maritime law	1	PhD or Doctorate in environmental law, public policies, or a related field. Experience in analyzing international or regional legal frameworks (e.g., biodiversity conventions).
Expert in Education Science and Popularization	1	Doctorate or proven experience in Education Science. Experience in producing educational materials (technical sheets, guides, videos) for AMP managers.
Representative of organizations operating in coastal areas	1	Holder of a Doctorate or PhD in Marine Sciences or a related field At least 10 years of experience in managing projects in coastal and marine areas Membership in one of the collectives 5 Delta or Gulf of Benin is desirable

## 6. Selection criteria

- ✎ Be a Researcher and/or Teaching-Researcher affiliated with a research center, scientific laboratory, or organization in West Africa.
- ✎ Possess academic excellence and proven experience in the relevant field.
- ✎ Have supervised at least two Master's studies or doctoral theses.
- ✎ Have experience in coordinating and supervising research projects and/or participating in scientific committees/thesis committees.
- ✎ Have the ability to work in an interdisciplinary team and in an international context.
- ✎ Be available to strengthen the scientific committee in carrying out its responsibilities.

## 7. Application file

Candidates must provide:

- ✎ A cover letter specifying the desired position and preferred academic fields.

- ✎ A detailed CV including a list of relevant publications (up to 5) and/or relevant projects carried out (up to 5).
- ✎ A concise note (maximum 2 pages) presenting their analysis and vision of research priorities related to the challenges of coastal and marine ecosystems in West Africa.

## 8. Terms of coverage

The project will organize an annual in-person meeting of the Scientific Committee, aimed at ensuring strategic coordination, validation of scientific orientations, and overall monitoring of the supported research activities. In this regard, the project will cover, within the limits of available budgets, for each Committee member, expenses related to participation in this meeting, including economy class airfare, accommodation, per diems, and local travel expenses, in accordance with the project's current procedures and scales.

In addition to the annual meeting, Scientific Committee members may be called upon, as needed by the project, to perform tasks such as reviewing, analyzing, and providing scientific opinions, particularly in the context of evaluating scholarship applications, monitoring the work of scholars, or validating scientific documents. Except in exceptional cases involving longer interventions, it is explicitly stated that these contributions are voluntary commitments, with no remuneration, compensation, or financial reimbursement, and are part of the spirit of academic contribution and scientific service for sustainable development and the management of marine and coastal ecosystems in West Africa.

## 9. Submission procedures

Send the complete file before February 15, 2026, at 5:00 PM (GMT) to the addresses: [david.akodekou@ucoopia.org](mailto:david.akodekou@ucoopia.org) and [florian.delespesse@ucoopia.org](mailto:florian.delespesse@ucoopia.org), copying [adje.franck@ucoopia.org](mailto:adje.franck@ucoopia.org). Subject: 'CSI\_WASOP\_Your Name\_Surname'.

## 10. Calendar

- ✎ Application deadline: February 15, 2026, at 5:00 PM (GMT).
- ✎ Results announcement: February 23, 2026.
- ✎ First CSI meeting : April 2026.

The implementation of the actions described in this document, as well as any commitments resulting from it, is strictly conditional upon the actual granting of funding by the lender. In the event of non-allocation, delay, or suspension of the subsidy, Ucoopia cannot be held responsible and reserves the right to modify, postpone, or cancel all or part of the planned activities, without any compensation or indemnity being payable.

## Contact

For any information:

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*The WASOP project is committed to gender equality and strongly encourages female applicants.*