What is the issue?

A Blue City is one in which economic growth, employment, innovation and social well-being are dependent on marine and freshwater sources, as well as on the preservation and integrated management of water. Water-related risks of too much, too little and too polluted water, exacerbated by climate change, demographic growth and urbanisation, are increasingly affecting the economy, human health and ecosystems.

Why cities?

- **Blue economic activities** (e.g. tourism, fishing, and marine biotechnology research) take place, create value and provide employment at the local level.
- **Water infrastructure investments at local level**, responding to water-related risks, directly affect the ability of cities to carry out blue economic activities (e.g. nature-based solutions can limit urban flooding and allow groundwater restoration).
- **Core city competences** such as land use, spatial planning and waste management greatly affect the level of water security and quality, which, in turn, affects the blue economy.

Why now?

- **2020** Green recovery from COVID-19
- **2030** UN SDG targets
- **2050** Net-zero GHG emissions

What should a Blue City look like?

The RISC-proof approach

- Resilient to shocks and risks exacerbated by climate change
- Inclusive by providing opportunities and protecting the most vulnerable from water-related risks
- Sustainable environmentally, preserving natural ecosystems
- Circular to limit GHG emissions and resource extraction by closing material loops, to tackle pollution, and to recover resources from wastewater
How? Getting water governance right!

Becoming a RISC-proof Blue City implies getting water governance right and at the right scale. This calls for a functional “city-basin” approach to water resources management.

Check the OECD Principles on Water Governance:

OECD (2015), The OECD Principles on Water Governance, oe.cd/48w

Water governance at city-basin scale

The project proposal

The OECD project Cities for a blue economy will support cities and basin authorities through:

- **Learning**
  Multi-level policy dialogues with cities and basins to identify challenges and opportunities for the blue economy, applying the RISC-proof approach

- **Sharing**
  Peer-to-peer learning on best practice and lessons learned from international experience

- **Measuring**
  Collecting and analysing data on the state of play and progress of cities and basins towards a RISC-proof approach and good water governance

- **Guiding**
  Defining and disseminating policy recommendations and action plans for Blue Cities

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Oriana Romano
Head of Unit, Water Governance and Circular Economy, OECD
oriana.romano@oecd.org

@OECD_Local
oecd.org/water/regional/