



WITHIN THIS ISSUE

Project KoM

Outreach

Advances

AIM

SARGEX officially launched in January 2026 under the Horizon Europe programme (MSCA Staff Exchanges), bringing together nine partners from six countries across Europe and Cuba. The project focuses on developing scalable solutions for Sargassum valorisation, including bioinputs, biochar, and renewable energy applications.

“We aim to transform an emerging environmental challenge into an opportunity for the circular bioeconomy, in line with key EU strategies such as the European Green Deal and the Sustainable Blue Economy.”

*Prof. Mercè Llugany
SARGEX Scientific
Coordinator
UAB*

SARGEX IS OFFICIALLY UNDERWAY

Sargassum biomass represents both an environmental challenge and an untapped opportunity. SARGEX brings together science, engineering, and innovation to transform marine biomass into sustainable, circular bioeconomy solutions.

At the same time, sargassum offers considerable scientific and industrial potential. Its biomass is rich in alginates, bioactive compounds, minerals, and functional polysaccharides, making it a promising resource for applications such as agricultural biostimulants, encapsulation technologies, and biomedical products.

January 2026 marked a milestone for European marine bioeconomy research: SARGEX was officially launched as a Horizon Europe MSCA Staff Exchange project (GA 101236659), bringing together nine partners from six countries across Europe and Cuba to tackle the challenges and opportunities of sargassum biomass.

During the first months, partners have focused on aligning scientific, technical, and communication activities, setting a strong foundation for collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and future impact.

The consortium gathered at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) for the Kick-off Meeting (KoM), the first in-person meeting of all partners. The event provided a key opportunity to align on scientific objectives, define management procedures, and set the four-year roadmap ahead. During the meeting, partners reviewed the full project workplan, clarified roles and responsibilities, and initiated secondment planning, while also establishing the governance structure that will guide SARGEX through to December 2029.

ADVANCES IN SARGASSUM COLLECTION

CONTRIBUTED BY: ICIMAR & FUH (WP1 CO-LEADS)

While Sargassum remains a growing concern globally, it is already a daily reality for Caribbean coastal regions. Large-scale influxes, exceeding 24 million tonnes annually, have major environmental, economic, and public health impacts. WP1 focuses on:

- Identifying target coastal collection sites in Cuba
- Assessing existing collection practices
- Developing environmental impact frameworks



FROM DESIGN TO DEPLOYMENT

CONTRIBUTED BY: AERIS (WP3 LEAD)

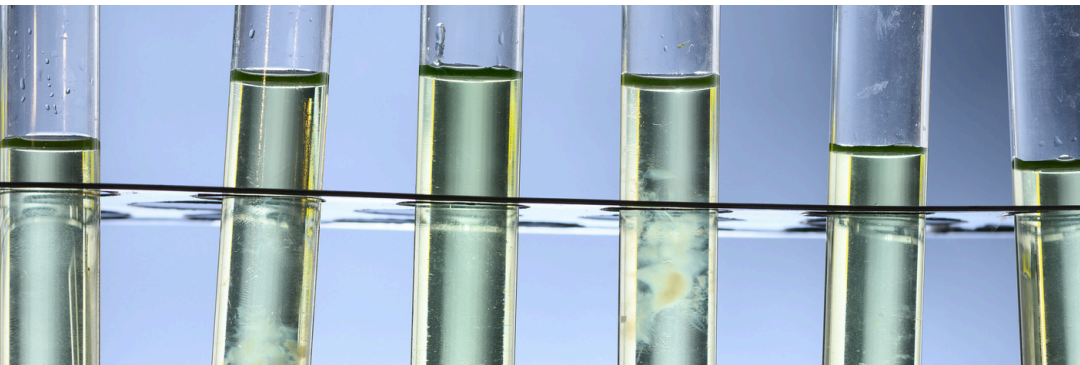
During the first project period, AERIS is preparing its contribution to WP3, focused on pilot plants and process validation to:

Support the conceptual design of modular pilot plants

Define environmental engineering criteria

Ensure flexibility across operational scenarios

Leveraging its expertise in treatment, valorisation, and sustainable processes, AERIS will contribute to scalable system development.



BUILDING THE SARGEX VOICE

CONTRIBUTED BY: SITES (WP5 LEAD)

Strong communication is essential for maximising project impact.

During the first months, SITES, leading WP5 (Dissemination, Communication and Networking), has been working closely with UAB to establish the project's communication infrastructure.

Key milestones include:

- Development of the P-DEC (Plan for Dissemination, Exploitation and Communication)
- Definition of target audiences and KPIs
- Creation of visual identity and communication materials

This newsletter represents the first step in SARGEX's commitment to clear, consistent, and impactful communication.



Be part of the change

SARGEX IN ACTION

The SARGEX project video is now available online, offering a clear and engaging introduction to the project's objectives, approach, and expected impact. It highlights how SARGEX transforms the growing environmental challenge of Sargassum blooms into sustainable, circular bioeconomy solutions through innovative processing systems and international collaboration.

<https://www.youtube.com/@SARGEX-EU>

WHY SARGASSUM

For those encountering SARGEX for the first time, the key question arises: why sargassum, and why now? The answer lies in the intersection of ecological urgency and bioeconomic opportunity in a way that few marine research programmes can match. Sargassum, a genus of brown macroalgae, has expanded dramatically across the Atlantic and Caribbean over the past decade. Annual blooms, now exceeding 24 million tonnes in Caribbean waters, have significant environmental and socio-economic impacts. These include hydrogen sulphide emissions linked to public health concerns, hypoxia events affecting local fisheries, and large accumulations on beaches that require costly removal. Climate projections suggest that rising sea temperatures and nutrient inputs may further expand this phenomenon toward European coastal areas, including the Mediterranean and Baltic Sea.

LOOKING AHEAD

SARGEX will continue building momentum through:

- Pilot plant development (WP3)
- Material innovation (WP2)
- Field validation (WP1)
- Dissemination and stakeholder engagement (WP5)

Future activities will focus on scaling solutions and strengthening impact across the bioeconomy sector.

Secondments Strengthen Knowledge Exchange. A core pillar of SARGEX is its MSCA Staff Exchanges model, enabling mobility between Europe and Cuba. Planned secondments will:

- Facilitate knowledge transfer
- Strengthen institutional collaboration
- Support capacity building

These exchanges ensure that SARGEX delivers real-world, globally relevant impact