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Favourable Winds for Companies in Bretagne Sailing Valley®, Gearing Up for New Challenges!

From 14th to 19th September, the Défi Azimut-Lorient Agglomération will see IMOCA skippers come together for five days of racing; a unique opportunity to showcase Brittany's sector of excellence in the technology of competitive sailing. The whole industry is gearing up to satisfy a full order book while continuing to innovate efficiently and sustainably. Internationalization, eco-design, sustainable technology transfers: the event in Lorient will be an opportunity for Eurolarge Innovation and companies in the sector to share the buzz of creativity at the heart of the Bretagne Sailing Valley®.

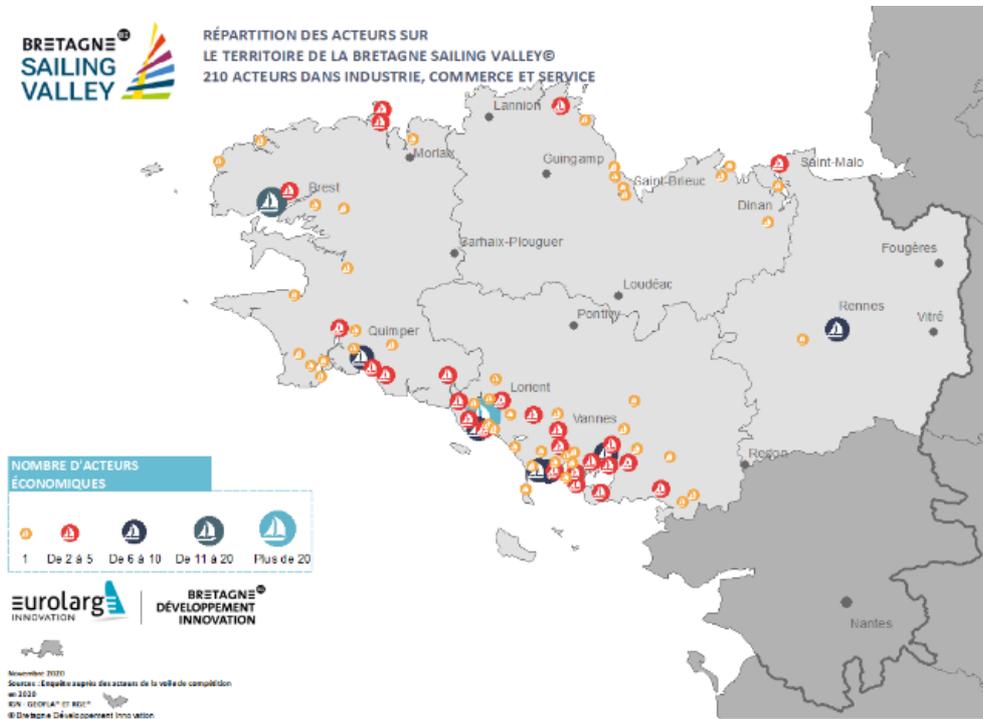


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Bretagne Sailing Valley®, home of competitive sailing

Brittany, the home of competitive sailing, hosts a considerable number of players in the industry whose influence extends well beyond French borders. The Eurolarge Innovation programme, created in 2005 and backed by Bretagne Développement Innovation, supports this sector of technology and helps develop an ecosystem of 210 companies generating some one thousand jobs in the region and an annual turnover of 83.5 million euros. *“This sector is economically and technologically essential. Our mission is to bring companies together with laboratories and institutions, to meet the challenges of the sector together, whether it be*

opening up to international markets, transferring technology to other industrial sectors, or revealing sustainable innovations and making an environmental transition,” explains Carole Bourlon, in charge of the competitive sailing and composites sectors at Bretagne Développement Innovation and also responsible for the Eurolarge Innovation programme. “Since 2016, this sector has shown constant growth. In 2019, sales rose by 16% and the sector resisted the covid19 crisis well in 2020” she continued ([read the study](#), conducted by BDI, on the economy of competitive sailing in Brittany).



2020-21 Vendée Globe: accelerating growth in the technological sector

Despite the pandemic, the ninth edition of the Vendée Globe took place this winter and was a huge popular success. Media coverage following the race was fabulous: 35% higher than the 2016-17 edition. Similarly, the economic impact can be felt concretely in the professional sector. Competitive sailing, particularly in IMOCA, has been buzzing ever since: partnerships with skippers have been renewed for the next four years, and new ones have been signed. *“The Vendée Globe succeeded beyond our expectations. After the race, most partners were delighted with the return on their investment and the momentum continues. The teams, skippers and everyone involved did a fantastic job!”* confirms Antoine Mermod, president of the IMOCA Class. As a result, IMOCA order books are full. There are no fewer than 10 official projects for new boats, which should make the companies in Bretagne Sailing Valley® very happy, as this is seen as recognition of their technological know-how. Strong development in the sector will be further strengthened by the many scheduled boat refits and the increasing attractiveness of the sector to foreign teams who should also be placing orders.

11th Hour Racing Americans choose Brittany

While most projects in Brittany are with French teams, the trend is set to change with foreign teams increasingly attracted Brittany to make use of this unique pool of skills. 11th Hour Racing Team, an American project, has been based in Concarneau for three years now, both to prepare a competitive sporting project with an existing boat, but also to design and build a

latest-generation IMOCA, the boat chosen by the organisers for The Ocean Race 2022-23. The Défi Azimut - Lorient Agglomération will be the very first race for Charlie Enright and Pascal Bidégorry at the helm of this new boat. *“It is incredible for our team to spend time in Brittany, home of the IMOCA Class. It’s very inspirational to see all the innovation, ideas and things the teams are doing here on their boats”,* said Mark Towill, 11th Hour Racing Team Director. *“There are so many trades and skills mobilised around The Ocean Race, and also a real French IMOCA culture”. “It’s quite admirable”,* adds Charlie Enright, skipper of the American team.



© Amory Ross / 11th Hour Racing

Eco-performance in Brittany, a strong ambition

Faced with the growing awareness and the challenge of reducing its environmental impact, the competitive sailing sector in Bretagne Sailing Valley® is adapting and innovating. This approach aims to develop sustainable racing yachts and performance systems by relying heavily on new class rules, especially those of the IMOCA Class finalised in March 2021 ([read here](#)).

In this context, the use of eco-design in conception and manufacturing is now a strategic issue for companies in the sector. This was revealed in a study conducted in June 2020 by Bretagne Développement Innovation for the Eurolarge Innovation programme: 76% of the companies questioned expressed their desire to be part of a collective approach and benefit from content and training on CSR. This key figure was the starting point for a year of collaborative work led by [Eurolarge Innovation](#) with architects, boat builders and equipment manufacturers and structured by the work of [Lucas Jacquet](#), a student from INSA Rennes. The reflection led to the creation of the project “Ecovoile: eco-performance in racing yachts”.

“Eurolarge Innovation has chosen to support the eco-performance of Breton competitive sailing technology companies for three years structurally through the Ecovoile project, which will be led by the ENS and co-directed by the UBS” explains Carole Bourlon. *“Ecovoile is the catalyst that will enable the industry as a whole to engage in ecological transition. “It will bring together the various technological building blocks of a boat, commence in-depth structuring and the transition towards more sustainable performance in the construction of racing yachts in Brittany”,* she continues. *“It will enable companies in the sector to co-construct an eco-performance approach to match their needs, with academic support (doctorate co-financed by the Brittany Region and ENS Rennes) and methodological support (engineer)”.*

A presentation of the Ecovoile project to companies as part of the Eurolarge Innovation programme will take place on 8th October at Finistère Mer Vent in Port-La-Forêt. Breton companies wishing to get involved should make themselves known, through a Call for Expressions of Interest.

Sustainable technology transfers for decarbonising maritime transport

In addition to competitive sailing, the Eurolarge Innovation programme helps companies in the sector to transfer their technologies to other industries. They are increasingly present in wind-powered shipping in response to a strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions adopted in

2018 by the International Maritime Organization (IMO). It aims to reduce CO2 emissions by at least 40% by 2030 and by at least 50% in 2050 compared to 2008. To meet these objectives, new technological solutions in propulsion methods need to be designed. Wind power is one of the answers to this challenge and companies in the Bretagne Sailing Valley® are driving it. The policy is backed by the Brittany Region, which supports innovative developments such as the Solid Sail/AeolDrive project led by the Chantiers de l'Atlantique for Silenseas, a 200-metre-long hybrid sailing vessel project, propelled by wind power and incorporating a wide range of innovative technologies: 1,200 square metres of composite sails with rigid panels and carbon balestron masts almost 80 metres high. 10 Breton companies all from the Bretagne Sailing Valley® competitive sailing industry are involved in this project, giving them the opportunity to express their ability to innovate to produce highly technical structures, just like the work they do on ocean racing yachts. Their work on this project can be found in fields as varied as simulation, structural calculation, construction of large composite parts, rigging, on-board electronics, data for performance, materials monitoring, analysis of performance data, sensors, etc. This project, which provides an answer to the technological challenge of ecological transition in maritime transport, could well serve as a model for other projects, a growth relay for companies in the sector in an emerging market with a bright future.

Events not to be missed during the Azimut-Lorient Agglomeration Challenge

Tuesday 14th September, starting at 2:00 pm

“Boat Building Innovation Workshop” organised by The Ocean Race in partnership with Eurolarge Innovation and the IMOCA Class, in the auditorium of the Cité de la Voile Eric Tabarly, by invitation and in digital format (more information on theoceance.com)

Friday 17th September

At 1:45 pm, Round tables “Composite materials for high performance naval structures” with Eurolarge Innovation, UBS, Lorient Technopole, Explore, La Vague, IMOCA, SELLOR in the auditorium of the Cité de la Voile Eric Tabarly, [on registration](#) The number of seats is limited to 120 people.

4:00 pm

Live TV broadcast from the Cité de la Voile with Carole Bourlon, head of the competitive sailing technology sector at Bretagne Développement Innovation and pilot of the Eurolarge Innovation programme, Katia Merle, a naval engineer at VPLP Design and other speakers upcoming, on the theme of the challenges facing the Breton competitive sailing technology sector over the next decade. Follow live on the Eurolarge Innovation, Lorient Agglomération, Défi Azimut and IMOCA Class digital platforms.

Press contacts

Bretagne Développement Innovation

Chrystèle Guy - c.guy@bdi.fr

[Press area](#)

Agence Oxygen

Emmanuelle Catheline - emmanuelle.c@oxygen-rp.com - +33 (0)6.79.06.36.11

Christelle Roignant - christelle@oxygen-rp.com