



Barriers to teaching ocean science in Greek schools

Martha Papathanassiou (1), Patricia McHugh (2), Christine Domegan (2), Susan Gotensparre (3), Geraldine Fauville (3), and Jon Parr (4)

(1) Hellenic Centre for Marine Research, Athens, Greece (mpapath@hcmr.gr), (2) NUI Galway, Galway, Ireland (patricia.mchugh@nuigalway.ie), (3) University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden (geraldine.fauville@loven.gu.se, susan.gotensparre@bioenv.gu.se), (4) Marine Biological Association, Plymouth, UK (jpar@MBA.ac.uk)

Most European citizens are not aware of the full extent of the medical, economic, social, political and environmental importance of the sea to Europe and beyond. Most citizens are not aware of how our day-to-day actions can have a cumulative effect on the health of the ocean – a necessary resource that must be protected for all life on the planet Earth to exist. In other words, European citizens lack a sense of “Ocean Literacy” - an understanding of the ocean’s influence on us and our influence on the ocean.

Sea Change, a 3.5 million EU-funded project started in March 2015, is designed to bring about a fundamental ‘Sea Change’ in the way European citizens view their relationship with the sea, by empowering them as ‘Ocean Literate’ citizens - to take direct and sustainable action towards healthy seas and ocean, healthy communities and ultimately, a healthy planet.

The project involves 17 partners from nine countries across Europe and will bring about real actions using behavior change and social engagement methodologies. Building upon the latest research on citizen and stakeholder attitudes, perceptions and values, the Sea Change partnership will design and implement mobilisation activities focused on education, community, government agencies, policy makers and citizens.

Eight consultations were held around Europe with regards to barriers to teaching ocean science at schools. All project partners used a Collective Intelligence (CI) methodology to involve target group(s) in active, direct participation for Sea Change. CI is a “barriers and value” structuring methodology, a process of critical learning and reflection followed by action, and then by more critical learning to enable mobilisation, design and development ‘with’ people rather than on their behalf.

In Greece, the consultation was carried out by HCMR, the lead partner for Greece. Participants were recruited through personal contact and existing education networks that the HCMR has previously worked with. In total, 13 stakeholders participated in the event, consisting of Incumbents, Challengers and Regulating agencies. The aim of this consultation was to gain a deep insight into stakeholders’ barriers, attitudes and perceptions towards teaching 12-19 years olds about the ocean.

The Greek education stakeholders identified 41 barriers in seven different categories to teaching 12-19 year olds about the ocean. Lastly, 18 options were proposed in order to overcome these barriers.