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“The sea talks to us, let’s listen to it!” – ocean science educational activities for children and general population

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Six young oceanographers (authors of this article), all working at the science institutions in Split (Croatia), connected closely through their work on SHExtreme and StVar-Adri projects. The members of the group previously had, in total, over 30 years of experience in organization and participation in voluntary popular science and educational activities, e.g., Science Festival, Science Factory, FantaSTikon. However, most of this was done in the large cities and at the mainland.

Partly motivated by the “science to all” idea, during 2021 the group had the vision of bringing ocean science to the inhabitants of the Adriatic Sea islands (hours distant to the large cities, having low number of daily connections, with low-count and prevalingly older population), especially children. Their aim was to offer various educational, science-promotive and fun extracurricular activities (main topic being sea) to the islanders, as these activities were rare even in pre-pandemic times and became almost non-existent during 2020/2021.

Thus, during the summer of 2021 “Oceanographers at the Island” held a series of events at three middle Adriatic Islands (Korčula, Ugljan and Hvar). The events included oceanographic science and art workshops for younger (6-10 years) and older (10-14 years) children, sea-topic boardgame gatherings and public talks at local cafes. During the workshops the children have done experiments and meteorological and oceanographic in-situ measurements, followed by the discussions and conclusions on the phenomena. As a result attendees have broadened their knowledge on the thermohaline properties and processes, sea motion and atmosphere-sea interaction. Highly incentive for the children to attend the workshops, selected (board)games, with topics of sea-ecology-strategy, made them revise their knowledge on the sea ecosystem while having fun and feel they, as humans, have an important impact of the present-and-future of their sea-oriented community and the planet. As a commune final product the attending children made posters and picture plates with the messages they found the most important and these were exhibited at the highest visibility places in their community (school or tourist information centre). To strengthen their remembrance on the events and “promises made to the sea” and motivating future science inclusion children were awarded by “The little oceanographer” diploma. General public talks, different at each location, presented an issue of interest for islanders of that

particular island. In Vela Luka on Korčula, the topic was a devastating Great Vela Luka flood of 1978 which brought severe destruction to the island, in Vrboska on Hvar, topic were "schigas" – a local phenomenon of sudden sea level oscillations specific for that village; and in Ugljan on Ugljan topic was climate change – of especial interest to community given the numerous natural disasters which occurred during the summer of 2021.

All events were covered by local media (including newspapers, radio, web portals and social networks), and the entire initiative was presented to public by national media. Being praised by the locals and visitors from all age groups, the "Oceanographers at the islands" are continuing their "The sea talks to us, let's listen to it!" work at new locations in 2022.