

International Ocean Literacy Conference

Ocean Literacy as a key cross-cutting area underpinning sustainable ocean management: EuroGOOS case study

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Abstract

The ocean has been increasingly taking a high-profile place on the international and European policy agendas. Driven bottom-up by the science community, the scientific evidence of the ocean's role and threats to its ecosystems have been steadily reflected in policy documents and successfully recognized in the UN Agenda 2030 dedicating a stand-alone Sustainable Development Goal to the ocean. Among further achievements are the inclusion of the ocean in the preamble of the COP21 agreement, and the inclusion of the ocean observing in particular in the G7 Ise-Shima Leaders' Declaration. Simultaneously, policy and decision-makers have recognized (in a number of strategies, e.g. in the European Union), the economic importance of the ocean and the growing need for a sustainable blue economy to supply food, materials, and services for the growing population. However, those top-down political processes do not benefit from the necessary uptake and recognition by individual stakeholders of ocean health and the ocean economy.

Since its establishment in the European policy space, EuroGOOS has seen that the level of awareness of the ocean's ecosystem and economic services and the importance of information about the ocean state and variability to maintain and advance those services, varies greatly across stakeholders. However, only with a broad stakeholder involvement and action across disciplines and economic areas, can the sustainable ocean economy and ocean health be improved. Within its communications strategy, EuroGOOS identified that enhancing ocean literacy will play a paramount role in achieving the policy objectives listed above. Furthermore, the role of the general public in influencing further political and governance actions is also critical.

The Our Ocean 2017 Conference gave an excellent opportunity for EuroGOOS to launch its first book on ocean literacy. The book was presented at the Our Ocean exhibition pitch stage and disseminated to several high-level conference speakers and attendees. Immediate enthusiastic feedback from the recipients of the book at Our Ocean demonstrated a high potential for the uptake and widespread use of this book. Indeed, during the first month following the launch, EuroGOOS received offers from several research institutes and NGOs to translate the book in their national languages. Translations are currently in preparation for the book's versions in: Italian, French, Portuguese, Russian, and several Baltic countries languages. The first test case for the book will take place in a French school in December 2017. Furthermore, the book has inspired a dedicated kids' area on the training website of the Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research.

The book, “The Ocean is My Home”, subtitled “For children, parents, and our ocean”, will be further disseminated among the following stakeholder groups:

- Policymakers – to clearly reveal the multifaceted nature of ocean matters;
- Scientific community – to empower them to speak about the ocean in their families, spreading ocean literacy beyond their professional circle;
- Children and general public – to stress that the ocean is important for everyone whether they live by it or far away; and explain what members of the public can do right now to contribute to the ocean’s recovery.

Approaching children with ocean literacy topics will be particularly important recognizing their significant consumer role, their future career choices, and their potential to act as ocean champions, engaging with adults in a tangible dialogue for better decisions related to ocean health and sustainability.

The book is available for download free of charge at: www.eurogoos.eu/publications. A limited number of hard copies is available upon request.



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