



Innovative Public Engagement Activities to Increase Awareness of the Ocean across Europe

Press Release: October 2016

The **Sea Change** project is holding a series of innovative public engagement activities across Europe in 2016 and 2017 to change the way European citizens view their relationship with the ocean. These outreach activities, which will be announced on the Sea Change calendar (seachangeproject.eu/events), are being co-created with citizens based on public consultations.

Many people are not aware of the ocean's influence on us and our influence on the ocean, thus lacking a sense of "Ocean Literacy". The EU-funded **Sea Change** project aims to raise European citizens' awareness of the intrinsic links between ocean and human health and to empower us to take direct and sustainable action towards a healthy ocean.

Early in 2016, citizens from across Europe produced videos on innovative concepts or events that would increase people's awareness and appreciation for the ocean. The winning ideas, including an educational activity box about coastal safety, a board game about ocean acidification and a contest to develop ocean-friendly clothes, have inspired public engagement activities which will be organised in seven European countries over the next year.

Aquaria and science centres across Europe will hold events to bring people together to share experiences and broaden their minds about the ocean. In an inter-generational exchange, senior citizens will share their knowledge and experiences from living or working on the coast with young people. Other events will engage water users, for example water sports enthusiasts, who will act as ambassadors for the ocean by spreading their passion for protecting this important resource.

Dr Jan Seys, Head of Communication at the Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ) and lead on this **Sea Change** mobilisation element, said: "By 'injecting' Ocean Literacy into science centres which have vast experience in science outreach and education, we hope to expand the levels of Ocean Literacy amongst the public. Science centres and aquaria are very strong ambassadors when it comes to sharing scientific knowledge with the public."

The public engagement events kicked off with an ocean weekend at the children's museum Muzeiko in Bulgaria from 7-9 October 2016. The festival featured activities designed to increase Ocean Literacy among children and their families, including: fun sports and activities related to water resources; movies dedicated to water sports and marine adventures; and meeting real ocean adventurers. Participants even had the opportunity to collect stamps from each activity and win an award as part of a **Sea Change** game.

All **Sea Change** outreach events seek to bring about real actions to increase Ocean Literacy using behavioural, systems and social change methodologies recommended by lead methodologists and social innovation experts Dr Christine Domegan and Dr Patricia McHugh from NUI Galway, Ireland. The activities will adhere to the five principles of behaviour change, which state that in order to influence behaviour, it is important to: get to know your target group(s) (Client Principle); help individuals pay attention to alternative choices (Competition Principle); look at the system you want

to influence as a whole (Collective Principle); seek imaginative and innovative solutions (Creative Principle); and identify any discrepancies between what people value and how they behave (Change Principle).

Tomas Rehacek, project manager from Ecsite who is leading the task on public engagement through innovation said: “We hope that these creative formats of public engagement will educate people about the indispensable role of the ocean and make them think about the changes they can make in their lives to help the Ocean become healthier.”

Discover more about past, current and upcoming **Sea Change** events and initiatives at: www.seachangeproject.eu, follow **Sea Change** on Twitter ([@SeaChange EU](https://twitter.com/SeaChangeEU)) or like us on Facebook ([@SeaChangeProjectEU](https://www.facebook.com/SeaChangeProjectEU)).

Notes for Editors

The **Sea Change** project is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement n° 652644. The project began in March 2015 and will run until February 2018. The Marine Biological Association, UK (MBA) is coordinating the project. AquaTT is the project dissemination partner.

Dr Jan Seys is the head of the Communication department of VLIZ, which promotes and supports Flemish marine scientific research and international marine education. Dr Seys, a marine biologist by training, has worked in marine and estuarine research and as managing director of a bilateral Kenya-Belgium cooperation in marine sciences. He is the current Chair of the European Marine Board Communications Panel (EMBCP).

Tomas Rehacek has worked as a project manager at Ecsite since 2015. Ecsite is the European network of science centres and museums, linking science communication professionals in more than 400 institutions in 50 countries. At Ecsite Mr Rehacek concentrates on science engagement, non-formal education and schooling, and responsible research and innovation.

Muzeiko is a children's science centre located in Sofia, Bulgaria. It was created and built on the initiative of the America for Bulgaria Foundation. Muzeiko's content was developed by leading scientists, educators and designers. The exhibits are based on the theory of learning through techniques for accelerated learning and expanding children's potential.

The winning ideas from the video competition can be found at: <https://goo.gl/9GXYsN>

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Alexander Kirilov, a Bulgarian diver speaking at the Muzeiko's Adventure Kids Day diving workshop. Source: Julian Hristov



Nataly Petrova, director of Bansko Film Fest discusses her selection of films at Muzeiko's Adventure Kids Day movie workshop. Source: Julian Hristov