

Press Release

16 May 2014

Sea For Society – Moving forward with a new European citizen’s perception on the Ocean

The **Sea For Society** is a FP7 MML (Mobilization and Mutual Learning) project that engages stakeholders, citizens and youth in an open and participatory dialogue to share knowledge, forge partnerships and empower actors on societal issues related to the Ocean.

The first phase of the project has come to an end and in total **39 Stakeholder and Citizens / Youth Consultation forums** took place in **nine European nations** representing specific marine regions – the Baltic and North seas, the English Channel, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean.

The results of the consultation forums are being analysed from a Social Sciences and a Marine Sciences perspective allowing an **updated European citizen’s perception on the Oceans**.

Engaging and empowering European citizens: on the way!

A total of **19 Stakeholders** and **20 Citizens/Youth Consultation Forums** took place in nine European countries (**France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden**) representing different European marine regions. The consultation forums engaged European stakeholders, citizens and youth in a participatory dialogue to discuss how European citizens engage and relate with the seas focusing on six themes linking marine environment to their everyday life: **Human Health, Energy, Leisure and Tourism, Transport, A Place to Live and Food Supply**.

The consultation forums counted with a high level participation of stakeholders, citizens and youth contributing to the success of the Sea For Society dialogue sessions.



1 and 2 – Stakeholder Consultation Forums: 1 – Portugal, Credit “Daniel Espirito Santo”; 2 – Italy, Credit “ADG” | **3** – Citizens / Youth Consultation Forums: 3 – Ireland, Credit “Olivia Daily (AquaTT)”

The **“Collective Intelligence”** methodology employed in the Consultation Forums was well received by the participants of the forums that commented that it was enjoyable to use and a great way of

identifying and discussing ideas from a group. The methodology is an “idea structuring” and “value structuring” process.

The **results from the Consultation phase** are at their final stage of analysis. They are being compared and analysed on a transnational basis in order to identify commonalities and differences across the different regions and cultures in Europe. The perceptions of the European citizens on the Ocean will contribute the definition of the **concept of Blue Society** that is also an objective of the project. The results of the consultation phase will lead to **mobilization actions** being taken at a European and national/regional level to address the concerns that the European citizens highlighted during the dialogue sessions.

The concept of Blue Society – going beyond the Blue Growth initiative

The Sea For Society intends to go beyond the **Blue Growth** initiative, helping to achieve Europe 2020 strategy for “smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”, by developing the **concept of Blue Society** which **explores how humankind can coexist with, and benefit from the oceans and their resources without harming them.**

The **Blue Society supports the development of new and innovative products and technologies based on the tremendous opportunities offered by the world oceans and the recent marine technological developments** to satisfy the needs of present and future generations in a spirit of “positive growth”, and taking into account the restoration and the sustainability of the marine ecosystems.

To accomplish that objective the SFS project has brought together a group of high level participants that are involved in the definition of the **Blue Society concept**. The **Blue Society Expert Group** is composed of 16 recognised experts in different areas of society as for example industry, innovation companies, research, education, arts and policy making.

The launch of this think tank group, chaired by François Simard, Deputy Director and Senior Advisor for Fisheries IUCN Global Marine and Polar Programme, took place on September 23rd, 2013. Currently the Blue Society Expert Group is **defining the founding principles of the Blue Society concept** which will be further detailed taking into account the European citizen’s perceptions on the Oceans resulting from the dialogue sessions.

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