



Overview

This information sheet is for partners and other relevant stakeholders interested in organising a community initiative in the context of Sea for Society, or other projects aimed at raising awareness and changing public attitudes towards marine ecosystem services. It is based on the principle that people will be more likely to change their attitude towards living in environmental harmony with the sea for the better if they feel emotionally involved in a positive way.



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Objectives

- To involve a broad audience in personal action, taking into account the importance of the Ocean for human life
- To receive further feedback from the general public on some aspects of the Blue Society Challenge and ideas on Blue Society solutions

At a glance

Duration: Long-term series of events. Note that due to the long-term nature of the concept, this activity would certainly last longer than the SFS project but could have lasting impact into the future.

Organisation time: At least a year

Target groups: General public, young people, local stakeholders, existing environmental and community groups

Organisation

Implementing or helping the development of Blue Society community actions or positive initiatives to create awareness and active participation through positive emotional involvement, education and information about the opportunities of marine resources and the impact man has on nature. The concept involves identifying local ambassadors, training and practical action. The Sea for Society project has an ambassadorial role in kick-starting each local action.

Partners should collaborate with or recruit local stakeholders or existing community groups, as champions of the project. These groups or individuals would then spread the word to the wider community. Examples could include local community and environmental groups, fishermen groups, local/national (voluntary) environmental agencies. The focus must be a local issue to begin with, to promote the maximum local engagement. In time, this engagement can be scaled up as the idea spreads to other individuals and/or groups.

These ideas can then be developed into a Sea for Society Community Initiatives database which can be used to provide examples for further action in other Sea for Society partner countries.

Overview:

1. Identify an existing community or group-led action towards marine environmental sustainability to be used as an example for others to follow.
2. Work with them in bringing about attitude change in the public towards marine environmental sustainability on a wider scale, leading to . . .
3. Further successful local projects in other areas.

Planning

This approach follows the successful formula of community engagement already followed by a number of organisations in promoting marine environmental protection including the Clean Coasts organisation (IRELAND), Surfers Against Sewage (UK) and the RARE organisation (Worldwide). It involves:

- Identifying an issue which engages people and communities at an emotional level (such as marine litter, sewage pollution, unsustainable fishing practices etc.) enough to take action.
- Finding ways to effectively act to redress this issue in a way that can be easily replicated by other groups and individuals.
- Implementing these actions successfully.
- Using the example of successful actions to inspire others in different locations to act – using those who participated in the original actions as ‘Ambassadors’ to spread the word and even train new groups to take effective action themselves.
- Ensure that the various groups who have been mobilised in this way share their experiences and their successes, building positively towards further actions, which in turn attract public interest and funding, leading to effective solutions to the original challenge.

Examples

Clean Coasts (Ireland) <http://www.cleancoastsireland.org/>

engages communities in the protection of Ireland’s beaches seas and marine life through engaging local coastal communities in the protection of their coast with over 400 groups taking part.

Surfers Against Sewage (UK) <http://www.sas.org.uk/>

is an environmental charity protecting the UK’s oceans, waves and beaches for all to enjoy safely and sustainably, via community action, campaigning, volunteering, conservation, education and scientific research.

Rare.org (Worldwide) <http://www.rare.org/>

For more than 25 years, Rare has empowered local communities in over 50 countries to shift from being resource users to environmental stewards. Rare’s unique approach appeals to hearts and minds through proven marketing techniques. Rare trains local leaders to lead change, leaving a legacy of increased capacity and a sense of ownership, responsibility and pride in conservation.