

1 Final publishable summary report

1.1 Executive Summary (short version)

Sea for Society (SFS) engaged stakeholders, citizens and young people in an open and participatory dialogue to share knowledge, forge partnerships and empower society on issues related to the Ocean. The project used this dialogue as a launchpad for strategic cooperation, while developing and enriching the concept of the **Blue Society**, a vision for how Ocean issues can be integrated within economic, environmental and cultural challenges facing society in years to come. This vision, which was developed throughout the cooperation, focused on combining the will and need for progress, while respecting the sustainability of marine resources.

SFS was a European Mobilisation and Mutual Learning Action Plan (MMLAP) funded by the European Commission's DG Research & Innovation under the theme Science in Society. The multidisciplinary partnership brought together 28 partners from 12 countries representing marine research institutes, funding agencies, science museums and aquaria, CSOs, higher education institutes and business networks.

A. Consultation

This dialogue began with thorough multi-stakeholder and citizen consultation on ocean issues in Europe. Following initial research, the Sea for Society team developed a cutting-edge methodology and implemented a full-scale consultation process across 9 countries, involving over 500 stakeholders and citizens – never before had stakeholders and citizens been engaged in dialogue on Ocean topics across Europe in this way. The outcomes of the consultations were unique and innovative because they presented, for the first time, a comprehensive and complex picture of the challenges for a Blue Society.

Analysis of the results of the stakeholder consultations has revealed that “unfounded attitudes and lack of awareness of marine issues” is perceived as the single biggest challenge we are meeting to foster a sustainable marine ecosystem, both for the EU as a whole and across different EU regions. This concerns both the general public and professional stakeholders. In terms of attitudes, the consultation pointed to the difficulty realising that the sea is a finite resource; “sea blindness”; failure to realise the urgency; or the refusal to place “man in nature”, for example. In terms of awareness, we can include lack of environmental awareness; lack of awareness of the sustainable development concept; low social awareness on marine issues; and the difficulty for the majority to see what is happening under the sea. The consultation showed there was still a need for more initiatives aimed at raising awareness among the public on these themes.

Another influential challenge identified by stakeholders was “governance and strategy”. Here, consultations highlighted aspects of marine governance (such as bureaucracy and lack of coordination and cooperation between governing bodies); strategy and policy issues (such as incomplete national policy on the protection of the marine environment, lack of strategy and vision from policy makers on Ocean issues); marine safety and security issues (such as lack of security or prevention relating to sustainable use of the sea and lack of resources); and research and innovation issues (such as insufficient scientific, technological and ecological data and knowledge, lack of incentivisation for base research, lack of technologies to exploit marine energies, and lack of interdisciplinary research).

A third key challenge identified was “inadequate scientific and general public knowledge”. This referred to a knowledge deficit: a lack of knowledge about the marine environment and human impact; the general public's

lack of knowledge about marine ecosystems, resources and services; and a lack of systematised information about the various sectors related to the sea. It also covered education: the lack of education and philosophy on environmental issues and lack of ability to communicate the issue in schools. Finally this theme covered the lack of skills, training and competences related to marine issues and lack of means and investment in training.

B. Mobilisation

To address these challenges, equipped with the consultation outcomes and analyses, SFS then went on to mobilise marine researchers, socio-economic stakeholders, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and individual citizens and youth in a mutual learning, open dialogue. This mobilisation aimed to raise key societal questions related to the Ocean, extract cross-cutting issues and propose challenge-driven solutions fostering a sustainable management of marine eco-system services by European citizens.

Mobilisation messages were defined and prioritised by target group with actions to take place on national and European level. Three strands of message and action were defined: Share information, Take initiative, and Lobby. The strands aim to address the main barriers identified during the Consultation Phase. The strategy addressed five target groups: Citizens, Youth, Business Sector, Researchers, and Policy Makers. Resources and tools were selected, tailored and circulated in the form of a complete reference guide, together with training via Sea Academy events and a specially produced web series of animated films, quiz and Blue Society Charters in order for Area Leaders to be able to draw up their own National Action Plans and lead their Area Teams.

Mobilisation took place across a total of 12 countries, in 11 languages, resulting in 160 activities in Europe between April 2014 and November 2015. 3 million people were made aware of the 22 defined types of mobilisation activities and of the SfS films, posters, messages, etc. Europe-wide, and more than 270 000 were actively engaged. Through the involvement of networks in the project, and the participation of many multipliers, this impact continues.

The mobilisation activities came in a range of types, from international conferences, exhibitions and festivals, to Think Tanks, Blue Cafés and Blue Talks. The mobilisation did not only roll out this engagement nationally, but continued the momentum of the project's synergies on a European and international level. A number of the European mobilisation activities were particularly impactful. The Citizens' Promise and Stakeholder Commitment were documents drawn up by the partnership with input from the Blue Society Expert Group and the outcomes of the consultation and mobilisation phase which encouraged private individuals and relevant organisations to sign up to adhere to the Blue Society vision, gathering thousands of signatures in the space of a few months, and set to continue to grow. The Blue Society Photo Contest attracted over 900 entries, representing significant engagement from citizens across Europe and beyond, and the winning submissions in the six Sea for Society categories were displayed at the Blue Society Launch Event at the EU Parliament in Brussels. Blue Cafés were held across Europe for World Ocean Day, giving the Sea for Society format a European impact for this event.

C. Blue Society concept

Meanwhile, Sea for Society launched and coordinated the work of a multistakeholder Blue Society Expert Group who analysed the outcomes of the various phases of the project and developed and enriched the Blue Society concept as a basis for improved ocean governance and renewed maritime research policy. Project partners worked to define the key principles of the Blue Society, drawing on the results of the consultation

process and the input of the Blue Society Experts, providing a series of recommendations for the Blue Society vision.

The overarching principle of the concept is common responsibility, common heritage, underlining the importance of the Ocean as a commonly shared resource requiring collective management by all. This thinking has provided the backdrop for the five interrelated Blue Society goals; i) Knowledge-based & Innovative Approach; ii) Integrated Policies; iii) Effective Enforcement; iv) Partnerships and Collaboration; and v) Education and Outreach. The need to take a knowledge-based and innovative approach is necessary in order to better understand the complexity of the Ocean, and the impacts on Ocean functions. Integrated policies are needed as many sectors are still fragmented. Effective enforcement and new technology will be vital. Partnership and collaboration, as well as education and outreach are essential in order to reach a Blue Society. It is interesting to note that at least two Think tank are working on the operationalisation of these principles, in France, to foster Blue Growth and a better maritime governance, in Ireland, to foster Blue Society literacy.

D. Policy impact

The concept was launched at the Blue Society Launch Event, November 2015, which brought together policy makers, government officials, businesspeople, the scientific community, and civil society in general. Three events were held as part of the Blue Society Launch: the Blue Society European Youth Parliament, the Blue Society Expert Think Tank, and the Blue Society Parliamentary Event. The Blue Society Parliamentary Event in particular surpassed all expectations with 140 guests present at the meeting from across Europe including three MEPs and representatives from the European Commission's DG RTD and DG MARE. Stakeholders showed their support by signing the Blue Society Stakeholder's Commitment advocating the transition towards a Blue Society.

The event also launched the Blue Society Policy Brief, which gave concrete recommendations on how to achieve the vision of the Blue Society as set out by the Sea for Society consultations and interpreted after analysis from our Blue Society Expert Group. These recommendations stated that in order to facilitate the transition towards a Blue Society, both experts and stakeholders urge policymakers to promote multidisciplinary and multi-stakeholder cooperation and partnerships; boost financing for research - particularly for sustainable ocean governance frameworks and innovative blue solutions; promote open access to scientific research results and underlying data; enforce existing marine policies; and promote environmental stewardship values at all levels of society through information and awareness-raising campaigns.

Outcomes of the Sea for Society initiative are now being integrated by policymakers and other stakeholders at European and national level. As a result of this strategy, Sea for Society has obtained buy-in from stakeholders and decision-makers at local, national and European level. This has been evidenced through the scale of the attendance at the Blue Society Launch event in the European Parliament in Brussels, the project presence at COP21 and COP 22, and the synergies achieved with current Horizon 2020 projects such as Sea Change, Columbus and MARINA. Sea for Society's action plan for sustainability of the Blue Society concept, drawn up in the final year of the project, will ensure this impact continues.

Sea for Society represented a crucial first step for a cross-sectoral dialogue in Europe on the relation between the Ocean and citizens' daily lives, with a wide-reaching impact far beyond the 42 months of the project. It laid foundations for future co-creation processes in support of responsible research and innovation for societal and marine challenges, for Blue Growth, and for making the Blue Society a reality.