Bringing About a Sea Change to Protect Our Oceans and Our Health

Press Release: June 2015

Sea Change, a new €3.5 million EU Horizon 2020-funded project, will address the challenge of raising European citizens’ awareness of the intrinsic links between the ocean and human health.

Europe cannot achieve sustainable exploitation of marine resources and maintain a healthy ocean unless its citizens understand the full extent of the medical, economic, social, political and environmental importance of the sea to Europe and how their behaviour can have an impact on marine ecosystems. By developing “Ocean Literacy” (an understanding of the ocean’s influence on us and our influence on the ocean) in Europe, Sea Change aims to foster responsible behaviour of citizens towards the seas and ocean and their resources.

Sea Change will run for three years and involves 17 partners from nine countries across Europe. From 12-14 May 2015, the project’s partners met in Plymouth to discuss strategies for bringing about a fundamental “Sea Change” in the way European citizens view their relationship with the sea.

Sea Change will move to bring about real actions using behavioural and social change methodologies. Building upon the latest social research on citizen and stakeholder attitudes, perceptions and values, the Sea Change partnership will design and implement mobilisation activities focused on education, community, governance actors and directly targeted at citizens.

Sea Change Coordinator Jon Parr, from the Marine Biological Association (UK), said: “This kick off meeting felt like the start of a new and exciting chapter in how we, as European citizens, view our seas and their importance in our daily lives. I hope it is a Sea Change moment! We have quite an ambitious programme ahead of us and it was encouraging to see that all of the Sea Change partners were ready to rise to the challenges, including linking into the other relevant initiatives around us.”

On the second day of the kick off meeting, collaborative workshops were held with Sea Change’s sister Horizon 2020 project ResponSEAble, which was also holding a coinciding kick off meeting in Plymouth. ResponSEAble aims to support the emergence of an effective and dynamic European ocean knowledge system that contributes to raising awareness on our (individual and collective, direct and indirect) responsibility and interest in a healthy and sustainable ocean.

Collaboration between these two projects ensures that efforts made in each project complement and support the other. During the workshops, the Sea Change and ResponSEAble partners made dedicated efforts to ensure: optimal and collaborative communication; efficient collection, review
and structuring of the available knowledge; the establishment of a shared framework of the concept of “Ocean Literacy”; and strategic engagement with decision makers.

Overall, the meeting was a success, with the partnership eager to begin work immediately, particularly on establishing the foundations for strong and robust strategies and campaigns to be used within the project. The Sea Change International Advisory Group is meeting in Lisbon in June as part of “Blue Week” and will be participating in a transatlantic Ocean Literacy workshop where a number of European, US and Canadian experts will give their advice on the project and the way ahead.

The Sea Change website will be coming soon at www.seachangeproject.eu. If you would like to know more about the Sea Change project or would like to receive regular updates on its progress, please contact its Communication Officer, Tanja Calis (email: tanja@aquatt.ie or tel: 0035316449008)

Photo caption: The Sea Change project partners at the kick-off meeting in Plymouth.
Notes for Editors

The Marine Biological Association, UK (MBA) is coordinating the project. AquaTT is the project dissemination partner. The Sea Change project is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement n° 652644.

Jon Parr, Sea Change coordinator, is Deputy Director at the MBA. He has a wide remit covering operations, the development of the research infrastructure and the development of the knowledge exchange programme. He has worked with the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) and sits on the several groups including the NBN National Schemes and Societies group and UK-EOF Citizen science group. Jon is the Data Archive expert and on the Executive of the UK’s Marine Environmental Data Information Network (MEDIN). Jon is responsible for the Educational Programme of the MBA including the public Sea Life Survey, the Shore Thing Project and the Recorders conference. Jon organised and chaired a workshop for European Commission on Transatlantic Ocean Literacy.

Sea Change Overarching Objective: Bring about a fundamental “Sea Change” in the way European citizens view their relationship with the sea, by empowering them – as ‘Ocean Literate’ citizens - to take direct and sustainable action towards healthy seas and ocean, healthy communities and ultimately - a healthy planet.

Specific Sea Change objectives:

- Compiling an in-depth review of the links between Seas and Ocean and Human health based on latest research knowledge outputs.
• Building upon the latest social research on citizen and stakeholder attitudes, perceptions and values to help design and implement successful mobilisation activities focused on education, community, governance actors and directly targeted at citizens.

• Building upon significant work to date, adopting best practice and embedding ‘Ocean Literacy’ across established strategic initiatives and networks to help maximise impact and ensure sustainability.

• Ensuring that efforts to sustain an ‘Ocean Literate’ society in Europe continue beyond the life of Sea Change through codes of good practice, public campaigns and other ongoing community activities.

• Ensuring that all activities of Sea Change are carefully monitored and evaluated to ensure maximum sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency.

• Ensuring knowledge exchange with transatlantic partners to bring about a global approach to protecting the planet’s shared seas and ocean.

• Engaging with citizens, formal education and policy actors in a practical mobilisation phase.

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