

Ocean literacy: mobilizing society to tackle ocean challenges, what can the EU do?

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Ocean challenges are complex. They entangle socio-economic and environmental issues in relation to climate change and pressures on biodiversity. They involve a range of socio-economic stakeholders, at different levels and in different manners. Because of this complexity, it is difficult to get a comprehensive perspective on ocean related challenges. At the same time, in order to address these challenges, it is of crucial importance to involve stakeholders. As the examples of climate change and fisheries management show, it is necessary but not sufficient to provide adequate scientific advice to policy makers. Society and particularly marine / maritime stakeholders must take responsibility for managing ocean related activities differently. This necessitates a minimum of scientific understanding of the complex issues involved. It also requires new ways of generating and sharing knowledge, in which science interacts with marine / maritime stakeholders to generate social innovation. The European Commission has been supporting such new approaches as in the SIS-MML (Science in Society – Mutual Mobilisation and Learning) programme of FP7 (7th research framework programme). As institutional discussions are on-going for the adoption of the future research and innovation programme, consideration must be given to the continuation of these innovative approaches, particularly suited to the complexity of ocean challenges.