

BLUE SMART: Blue education for sustainable management of aquatic resources

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The development of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture is one of the strategic guidelines of the development of fisheries sector in the Republic of Croatia. In the Operational Programme for support of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund in Croatia there is an estimation of roughly 25 000 people employed in this sector in Croatia. More specifically, around 30% of these employees work in the fisheries sector in Zadar County. Being a strategic sector of the County's development, fisheries and aquaculture are very often marked in the relevant local and national strategies as an emerging sector with a very high potential for growth and jobs. This brings the urgent need to create new workforce on the labor market, capable of supporting the further development of the blue sector in Zadar County and Croatia in general. Hence, the project "Blue Education for Sustainable Management of Aquatic Resources - BLUE SMART" was applied and positively evaluated through the call: Blue Careers in Europe, within European Maritime and Fisheries Fund- EMFF (Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises- EASME). BLUE SMART project started on 1st January 2017 and will finish on 31st of December 2018.

The general objective of the BLUE SMART project was to create new skills and competences in blue economy sector and increase the employability of current and future sectors' workers in the County of Zadar. First specific objective was to create conditions for training of a new generation of students and professionals equipped with the appropriate skills to match the needs of the industry. This specific objective has been achieved by creating conditions for the establishment of a new graduate (Master) study "Sustainable Management of Aquatic Ecosystems". The idea for such graduate study in sustainable management of water ecosystems was greeted both from the local companies and undergraduate students. Second specific objective was to provide people already working in the field with the new skills required, which will be achieved by design of a Training Course for the Vocational Education and Training in "Introduction to sustainable fisheries practice". The Training Course will retrain and upskill workers employed in blue economy or other sectors and/or people currently unemployed for a job in the blue economy, as well as diversify and expand the skills of people currently employed in the blue economy to progress in their career and/or to facilitate their mobility to other maritime jobs.

Keywords: fisheries; aquaculture; Zadar county; sustainable management; aquatic ecosystems