

Ocean philanthropy to feed marine scientific knowledge

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In 2013 the Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ) explored the possibilities to initiate a philanthropy initiative. In this way, VLIZ wants to offer people and companies with a passion for the sea the opportunity to contribute to a sustainable and healthy sea. From 2014 onwards, VLIZ will be using its membership fees and welcomes donations, bequests and all sorts of financial contributions, which will be spent to expand and develop the scientific knowledge regarding coastal and marine areas.

Eligible projects should contribute to the scientific knowledge and knowledge building of coastal and marine areas anywhere in the world and should bear a neutral, objective message. The initiative also needs to push forward a more sustainable use of our seas and ocean by generating new scientific knowledge and data measurements. For instance, projects can be elaborated to collect scientific data concerning the condition of the sea as well as the setup and development of specific monitoring campaigns and networks. All this is done not only in close collaboration with scientists but with the general public as well. Such citizen science initiatives result in a significant increase in public support.

Depending on the philanthropy budget, the available funds will be used for projects belonging to one of the three main categories:

- (1) Category 1 - Sea observation networks ('citizen science');
- (2) Category 2 - Education and long-term data sets;
- (3) Category 3 - Development of new equipment.

VLIZ identified several possible projects, being:

- (1) '**SeaWatch-B**', a **Belgian beach observation network** is designed to generate an accessible but sustained long-term monitoring network for the Belgian coastal waters, based on a network of volunteers supervised by experts.
- (2) '**Science-ship**' actively involves pleasure craft in maritime surveillance. By providing them with targeted training and measuring equipment they can generate a multiplication of *in situ* data. Optionally, connection can be found with running initiatives such as the 'Ocean Sampling Day' initiative <http://www.microb3.eu/osd>.
- (3) '**Build your own sea robot**' enables young people, with technological interest, in developing new sea-measuring equipment.

More information can be found at: <http://www.vliz.be/en/your-contribution>.