

Changing people's ways: how can our work bring about behavioural change?

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All Europeans live within less than 750km of the ocean or a sea. And yet they are not aware of the wealth of resources and services they get from the ocean and how their lives depend on the ocean's health. In this session, we will briefly highlight some recent innovative experiences on assessing the public's behavioural change after participating in engagement activities.

Science centres, museums and aquaria display wonderful exhibitions and programmes and develop campaigns to promote public engagement with the ocean. However, studies show public perception of the ocean's health remains limited and people do not always act according to the information received. Assessing the change of minds and behaviour is thus a critical issue for institutions in the area of ocean literacy and conservation.

A classic tool is the Passport of the Citizen of the Ocean, first issued by the World Ocean Network in 2004 and now counting over 700 000 subscribers in more than 35 countries. Citizens commit to adopt certain behaviours while participating in initiatives of members of the network. Through a new digital Passport, citizens will be able to upload information about what they are doing for ocean literacy.

The European project Sea for Society, which in 2015 launched the Blue Society concept, worked on behavioural change on the topic of marine ecosystem services, bringing together citizens and stakeholders in dialogue. This was achieved through the largest European consultation of its type, followed by a wide range of mobilisation activities, the outcomes of which are now available.

Other methodologies envisage the co-design and co-creation of the campaigns and exhibitions with the public. The development of the messages to transmit is done in collaboration with stakeholders, who help the organizers build more effective tools of engagement.

The recent exhibitions of Città della Scienza or Aquarium Finisterrae, incorporating inputs from students whose views are previously assessed, or the ground breaking evaluation procedures of H2020 Sea Change project to assess the increase in citizens' ocean literacy and behavioural change are also inspiring examples. While developed to address ocean conservation issues, we believe these methodologies can be adapted to other topics and be inspiring for other public engagement initiatives.

This workshop session will give a set of quick-fire presentations of some examples from the field, before launching into table discussions of key questions on how our work can truly bring about behavioural change.