

## “Bridges Between School and Blue Science”: Interaction Student - Investigator in a Non-Formal Educational Environment

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“Bridges Between School and Blue Science” is a project coordinated by the Portuguese Task Group for the Extension of the Continental Shelf. Its main goal is to allow the active engagement of high school students in science and technology investigations about the ocean. Through partnerships with several investigation centers around the country, we allow youngsters to take part in actual scientific and technological work, alongside investigators in their professional environment.

“Bridges Between School and Blue Science” contributes to improve scientific and ocean literacy of youngsters, who are used in their classes to look at these topics from an exceedingly theoretical point of view. From a student’s perspective, being able to work in a professional and specialized environment represents a great opportunity to be in actual contact with science just as it is practiced on a daily basis. In this project, marine science communication is made directly on the investigators’ working place, be it the lab or the sea.

But students are not the only beneficiaries of the project. Investigators have to be able to make their work reachable and understandable for an interested audience, but also an inexperienced one. They have to take on the role of science communicators that is not that common in the Portuguese academic environment. This different way of communicating is usually neglected by investigators, but it actually allows them to reflect about their own work from a fresh perspective.

Instituto Superior Técnico, from the University of Lisbon, is one of the investigation centers that took part in the project, allowing high school students to be included in two of their investigation groups: Marine, Environmental and Technology Center (MARETEC), with a project about modelling applied to marine currents; and Institute for Systems and Robotics (ISR), that involved students in the construction, launch and monitoring of a drifter.

Besides contributing to the synergies between these investigation groups, the involvement in the project represented a great challenge for the investigators, who had to come up with questions in their field of work that could be understood and worked on by high school students.

After their contact with marine science and technology alongside investigators, these students had to present what they worked on in a congress that gathered students, teachers and scientists. It was the investigators themselves who had to publically discuss with the students their findings and experiences.