

“Municipalities, the missing link between marine science and its communication with the public” – Cascais case study

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Marine science can be very appealing and it is not unusual for common people to be overwhelmed when a scientist is talking about his field work and his discoveries. However, the challenge is to transform a simple conversation into marine science communication, explaining in an accessible way several facts and concepts behind the science, promoting the link between our day to day tasks and the importance of this science in our current life and future generations. The concepts are complex and many times not easily perceived by the majority of the population that uses the ocean for leisure and feeding purposes.

Cascais is a municipality surrounded by sea and highly dependent on the sun and sea tourism activities that are responsible for the main portion of the 466 000 visitors every year. The Municipality focuses heavily in communication and efforts to improve its services. This work intends to present several practical examples of marine science communication addressed to different target audiences.

Since 2007 the municipal environmental strategy created different agencies and started a new environmental program focused on marine conservation and biodiversity protection for different target audiences. In 2012 the new municipal strategy integrated those agencies in one called CASCAIS AMBIENTE (Environment Municipal Company of Cascais). Depending on the target audience, CASCAIS AMBIENTE created several imaginative solutions to interact with our population and visitors. Some examples are public conferences, social networking, theater plays, educational program or even comic books.

The Environmental Education and Awareness Program for all schools concerning different subjects such as Oceans, Nature, Energy, Waste and Citizenship results from the collaboration between the scientific community and our municipality in accordance school curriculum. During the last school year the environmental education task group of CASCAIS AMBIENTE performed 808 activities for 20 304 students ranging from kindergarten to secondary school the majority of which were related to oceans (265 activities) and nature (235 activities).

One other example is “Clean up the Atlantic”. It is an annual awareness event where scuba divers are invited to clean a small part of Atlantic Ocean near Cascais center simultaneously with coastline clean up event with other volunteers. Since the first edition in 2008 it was collected over 9 tons of marine debris and has had the participation of over a thousand volunteers.