

Engaging youth across Europe with the ocean – Experiences from the Professor Mário Ruivo Competition

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For its 10th Anniversary in 2012, EurOcean launched the Professor Mário Ruivo Prize to raise public awareness on the importance of the ocean and ocean-related services to humankind. The Prize, which sought the participation of school-aged young people, was named after EurOcean's former President and founding father, and it rewarded the best original short movie on the theme: "Seas and Us - Links between Ocean and Daily Life Activities". In 2016 a new edition of the prize was conceived to support the Blue Society Principles¹ by awarding a team of young people for an original project on the theme: "Your Ocean, Your Future". This time three proposals adjudicated to be the best are being awarded a small amount of funding to help the teams implement their ideas in a practical way. Ultimately the most impactful and successful project will be chosen as the competition winner and will receive a monetary prize.

After organising these two initiatives we came to understand that the way we prepare for the contest is vital to assuring its success. Organisation, clear definition of target audiences and objectives frame not only the number of responses but also the quality of the entries submitted to the contest.

The first important step is effective dissemination and advertising. What is the best way to make information available to the youth? We believed that the best way was to address the educators, but was the information really passed on? How do you identify and then contact all the schools in Europe? What about communicating in English only? Our approach and lessons learned will be addressed in this presentation.

Additionally, we need to find an appropriate lexicon to grab the attention of our target audience. Are the goals of the Prize engaging enough? Is the process easy enough for young people to understand and follow? Is the contest appealing and fun? Is it achievable in a limited amount of time?

Even before launching a contest timelines have to be defined, however the European school calendar varies from country to country, so it is a challenge to find a universal compromise that takes term time, exams, vacations and all the other activities and contests into account. We show how we addressed these challenges.

If all the previous planning goes well the contest will gain significant interest and receive a lot of applications. The next big challenge is to choose a winner! Let us guide you through our experiences, provide some tips and tricks for success and answer all your questions! Indeed we hope to be able to present the winning entry of the Professor Mário Ruivo Prize for 2016 during this CommOcean event.

Reference
www.bluesociety.org