

Seaside activities in marine science and education

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The ocean is in a severe and accelerating crisis, threatening the environment and human well-being. First among the problems plaguing the ocean is overfishing, which has caused the collapse of fish stock and the loss of biodiversity. This is a global problem and it will require a global solution to bring the ocean back from the brink of irreversible decline. International collective action starting at the United Nations (UN) is the most effective way to create such a solution.

Working within the UN, the Ocean Sanctuary Alliance (OSA) and the Government of Italy have spearheaded the 10X20 Initiative, a plan of action to develop a scientifically-based framework that will assist Member States in achieving the globally agreed commitment to conserve at least 10 percent of coastal and marine areas by the year 2020. This is Target 5 of the UN's SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources. The 10X20 Initiative's aim is to create a thoughtful, coordinated global network of marine protected areas (MPAs) that achieves the 10 percent target to conserve biodiversity.

It is a common practice that science is presented out of context and thus it seems irrelevant to peoples' lives. As a result, many of them lose interest. If a person's own motivation is disrespected, even the most careful preparation on the part of the educator will lead to a failure. It is crucial, therefore, to highlight the importance of science and its relevance to peoples' lives. People, especially young learners, also need more positive and realistic demonstrations of the scope and limitations of science and scientists.

Therefore, we have decided to create a space on the beach for the summer season of July-August 2016 at the beach resort of Sopot, part of a Tri-City agglomeration, one of the most popular summer resorts in the Baltic Sea region. In 2015 we had a small scale pilot beach project, which involved researchers from the Institute of Oceanology Polish Academy of Sciences in Sopot, who shared their knowledge to general public straight on the Sopot beach. We had a small area for people to come and discuss issues related to their interests and even concerns, e.g. sea water temperature rapid changes, cyanobacteria blooms, endangered species, marine protection issues, etc.

We gained a lot interesting experience last year. This has resulted in a much more elaborate project, which will involve many experts on marine issues who will be present in a large dedicated area on the beach for July and August 2016. We will have workshops, presentations and simply discussions with all interested participants, who are free to join and leave at any time.