



MEDIA RELEASE

WORKSHOP FOCUSES ON CONNECTING EUROPEANS TO THE OCEAN “Jurmala Dialogue” connects knowledge to action

Jurmala, Latvia (7 April 2017) – Building knowledge and awareness about the importance of oceans to the daily lives of Europeans was the main topic at this week’s ResponSEABLE Jurmala Dialogue held on the edge of the Baltic Sea in Latvia.

ResponSEABLE is a 15-partner project funded by the European Commission under its Horizon 2020 programme. The project’s goal is to raise the awareness of European citizens on how -- whoever they are - they affect, and benefit from, the ocean.

Funded through the EU Horizon 2020 programme, ResponSEABLE’s goal is to increase literacy about the links between Europeans and the oceans on which we depend. To do this it has begun by looking at what we know know about the current state of the oceans, the direct or indirect effects of economic activities and our perceptions and understanding of this connection. In this way, the project will identify gaps in knowledge that need to be filled to expand ocean literacy in Europe.

The Jurmala Dialogue was attended by more than 40 people from research institutes, NGOs and industry to discuss how behaviour can be changed to reduce the effects of human activities on the marine ecosystems that support them.

“No matter where they live, Europeans are connected to the ocean,” said Heidrun Fammler, one of the project coordinators. “Europe is surrounded by the ocean and these bodies of water are used for wind farms, oil and gas exploration, transportation and recreation.

“These connections touch the lives of the people who live along coastlines and make their living from the sea, just as they affect people who live in the centre of the continent,” Fammler added.

“Our main goal is to provide the right knowledge and understanding to support changes in behavior that will contribute to healthier oceans,” said Pierre Strosser, who also coordinates the project. “We’re extremely happy with the outcome of the workshop where participants discussed how we can build ocean literacy – and how ResponSEABLE can contribute to behaviour change.”

Workshop participants shared their experience and discussed everything from new communications methods to barrier to communications and behaviour change. The conversation focused on the six “key stories” ResponSEABLE is using to illustrate the challenges and opportunities for behaviour change. These stories focus on sustainable fisheries, the impact of cosmetics and microplastics, coastal tourism, eutrophication in the Baltic and Black seas, invasive species in the Mediterranean and balancing vulnerable marine ecosystem with the need for marine renewable energy.

The next stage of the project will see the development of exciting new communications and literacy products showcasing the links between the ocean and European citizens - no matter where they live on the continent.

What is “ocean literacy”?

To be “ocean literate” means to be aware of the importance of the ocean, to understand its influence on humans, and the influence humans have on the ocean. It means knowing how to protect the ocean, and to seize the opportunities it offers. Overall, an ocean literate person is a person who must understand the essential principles and fundamental concepts of the ocean and its resource, be able to communicate them, and be in a position to make informed and responsible decisions regarding the ocean and its resources.

How will ResponSEABLE contribute to changing behavior?

The underlying assumption of ResponSEABLE is that investing in literacy will help change how Europeans view their relationship with the ocean. This will pave the way for changes in behavior which will ultimately reduce pressures on coastal and marine ecosystems. By generating greater public debate and knowledge, ResponSEABLE will assist all citizens and sectors of European society in making more informed choices that will help secure healthier and more sustainable oceans.