

## Co-designing actions and guidelines to reinforce citizen engagement in the Mission Ocean and Waters

**Date:** Tuesday, 26 November 2024

**Theme:** Citizen Engagement & Education

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### Workshop Summary

The workshop “Co-designing actions and guidelines to reinforce citizen engagement in the Mission Ocean and Waters” gathered participants of the 3rd Mission Arena to address existing challenges for citizen engagement in the Mission Ocean and Waters.

Raquel Ledo Doval, a PhD candidate from the Westerdijk Fungal Biodiversity Institute, set the scene of the workshop by presenting the Pint of Science, a volunteer-led international festival that aims to make science accessible to everyone. By bringing researchers and citizens together in a casual environment, the festival attempts to facilitate curiosity, encourage dialogue, and make science relatable. In 2024, the Pint of Science hosted 2102 events in 24 countries and attracted more than 90.000 participants. The festival, as Raquel highlighted, could serve as a model for public engagement in the Mission Ocean and Waters through science communication.

The workshop continued in the round-table discussions where participants developed a list of actions and guidelines to overcome the challenges for citizen engagement identified during previous local and regional workshops:

**Round Table 1:** Little opportunities for inclusion in the school curriculum and change to a more interdisciplinary approach. During the discussion participants underlined the importance of considering a variety of teaching methods in different countries. Where the school curriculum doesn't allow for flexibility and rapid changes, the emphasis could be made on extra curriculum activities, such as the interdisciplinary days dedicated to ocean-related issues, study visits, etc. The participants also highlighted the need to improve the ocean literacy of teachers who could then integrate their knowledge into the classroom activities.

**Round Table 2:** Measuring the impact and behavioural change of a citizen engagement action. The discussion revolved around on the importance of data when measuring the impact of a citizen engagement action. On the example of sustainable food consumption, the participants stressed the need for a data collection by all stakeholders in the food production chain and consequent data analysis to understand consumer behaviour.

**Round Table 3:** Not having dedicated funds to execute engagement activities. The participants discussed the importance of multistakeholder collaboration to facilitate citizen engagement through communication. They discussed that different stakeholders should contribute to the development of an aligned communication strategy that would create a long-lasting connection with citizens through improved story-telling and science-backed messages.

**Round Table 4:** Once public or relevant stakeholders are engaged, keeping up the engagement is often a challenge. The discussion highlighted the necessity to cultivate in citizens a sense of ownership to keep them engaged, which should be a focus of a project communication strategy from the very beginning. Communication through the various media platforms might play an important role in creating the sense of ownership (for example, through the production of documentaries with realistic and relatable “heroes”; relatable social media campaigns, etc.)