



OCEAN LITERACY BRIEF #1

Towards a sustainable ocean: connecting science, education and blue sectors to strengthen ocean literacy in Europe¹

Key Recommendation:

- 1.** Foster Collaboration between Education and the Blue Economy: Enhance partnerships between the blue private sector and educational institutions. This can involve blue professionals contributing to educational activities, sharing their knowledge of ocean-related challenges, and strengthening students' roles as agents of change. The development of active learning tools such as virtual reality and online courses can aid in bridging the skills gap between current training and employer needs, thus fostering the next generation of ocean stewards and blue professionals.
- 2.** Encourage Private Sector Engagement: Address the challenges of private sector engagement in ocean literacy by highlighting the benefits beyond immediate profitability. This includes recognising ocean literacy activities as part of corporate social responsibility, offering incentives like tax benefits, and sharing success stories to raise awareness. Initiatives like an 'Ocean Friday' could integrate ocean stewardship into corporate culture, increasing involvement and investment in sustainable practices.
- 3.** Build Common Ground and Recognition: Work on developing a shared language and narrative between scientists and the blue economy to promote mutual understanding and trust. Additionally, raising awareness about the concept and significance of ocean literacy within the private sector is important, demonstrating its essential role in achieving a sustainable blue economy. Investigate incentives that could motivate the private sector to participate more actively in ocean literacy initiatives, such as integrating these activities into their environmental and social governance strategies.

INVOLVING THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN OCEAN LITERACY: SHARING EXPERIENCES

The EU4Ocean Coalition, supported by the European Commission, is a pioneering initiative designed to elevate ocean literacy to a priority status across Europe. This comprehensive effort is structured around the EU4Ocean Platform, the Youth4Ocean Forum, and the Network of European Blue Schools. The coalition actively engages a spectrum of private sector entities, accounting for 12% of its platform membership, predominantly SMEs, alongside collaborations with industry clusters and associations. Additionally, the private sector bolsters 10% of the blue challenge projects in schools, with substantial involvement from algae, aquaculture, boating, and fishing sectors.

Key focal areas have been identified:

- Integration of private sector expertise into educational programmes, thus enriching the curriculum and reinforcing the societal impact of these initiatives while fostering a new generation of change-makers for sustainability.
- Establishing communication channels to facilitate the dissemination of industry knowledge concerning oceanic challenges and solutions ensures partnerships are underpinned by transparency and trust and are devoid of superficial environmental claims.
- The strategic importance of forming alliances between the blue economy and educational entities, leveraging digital innovations and interactive learning methods and promoting

discourse that includes scientists, industry professionals, educators, and media experts.

- Capitalising on the potential of private sector-driven ocean literacy initiatives, which are instrumental in harmonising the skillsets of the emerging workforce with the evolving requirements of the blue economy, thereby attracting youth to this vital sector.

Connecting the blue private sector more closely with ocean literacy endeavours is crucial for nurturing the next wave of ocean stewards and professionals. This alignment is critical to addressing current and future workforce demands and ensuring the industry successfully implements climate and ecological strategies.

¹ This OL brief is based on the synthesis of the Ocean Literacy workshop co-organised by JPI Oceans, IOPAN/Today We have, the University of Brest and the EU4Ocean Coalition at the 2024 European Maritime Day (EMD), May 2023.



NAVIGATING FROM CHALLENGES TO SOLUTIONS

Pursuing ocean literacy, particularly involving stakeholders from the private sector, presents numerous challenges. A significant barrier is the perceived lack of immediate financial gain, which has notably dampened private sector interest and resource allocation. Moreover, there's a recognition gap — many in the industry are unaware of what ocean literacy entails or how it transcends typical corporate communication. Furthermore, establishing a unified and uncontroversial dialogue between scientists and industry professionals has been another hurdle, complicating collaboration efforts.

However, there is a sea of potential solutions. For instance, offering financial incentives like tax reliefs or commendations can spur interest. Another compelling approach is to weave ocean literacy efforts into the fabric of corporate

social responsibility, aligning them with businesses' broader societal goals. This alignment secures investment and elevates the initiatives' status within the corporate ethos.

Additionally, intensifying efforts to publicise success stories and ocean literacy activities involving the private sector can spark greater enthusiasm. Hosting events and discussions within corporate settings or at broader venues like conferences can catalyse interest and engagement. Proposing dedicated initiatives, such as an 'Ocean Friday', can encourage companies to commit to marine sustainability regularly.

Building authentic partnerships anchored in trust and a shared ethos becomes integral to these solutions. Emphasising the genuine nature of collaborations can bridge the emotional and ethical gaps, nurturing a collective will to safeguard our oceans.

CHARTING THE COURSE AHEAD

As we sail toward enhanced ocean literacy with the engagement of the blue economy's private sector, we acknowledge that this voyage is a marathon, not a sprint. To make headway, a collective and concerted effort is essential in the following areas:

- Delving into the private sector's perspectives, we aim to unravel the motivations driving their participation and support for ocean literacy, fostering a shared commitment to marine stewardship.
- Crafting a common dialect and story is crucial — one that resonates across the scientific community and the blue economy, laying a solid foundation for enduring partnerships.
- Amplifying the message of ocean literacy and its pivotal role in nurturing a sustainable blue economy will help to embed this understanding within the fabric of the industry.
- Probing the efficacy of potential incentives, such as incorporating ocean literacy endeavours into companies' environmental and social governance frameworks, can align corporate strategy with ocean conservation goals.

What is the main challenge you face when developing ocean literacy targeting or associating representatives from the (blue) private sector?



So... your three favourite solutions for addressing key challenges?



These considerations are vital nourishment for thought, poised to inform and guide the EU4Ocean Coalition's strategic planning and collaborative undertakings in the quest for a well-informed and responsible approach to our oceans.

