

Credits: Toby Matthews/Ocean Image Bank

ECOP PROGRAMME

2021 - 2026: Five Years of Achievements

ECOP
Early Career
Ocean Professionals

2021
2030
United Nations Decade
of Ocean Science
for Sustainable Development

ECOP PROGRAMME 2021-2026: Five Years of Achievements

2021 2030 United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development

ECOP Early Career Ocean Professionals

© 2026 ECOP Programme.
Electronic copies of this report are available from the ECOP Programme website: https://www.ecopdecade.org/.

Front cover artwork: Toby Matthews/Ocean Image Bank
Graphic design: Manon Hetsch

.

This Report should be cited as:
ECOP Programme. 2021-2026: Five Years of Achievements. (Ed.) Evgeniia Kostianaia. ECOP Programme, 2026, 224 pp.

Acknowledgements: This report contains contributions from the nodes, task teams and endorsed projects of the ECOP Programme. These inputs are greatly acknowledged.

Credits: Ishan Hassan/Ocean Image Bank

CONTENTS

01
Preface

02
Introduction

03
Selected Highlights

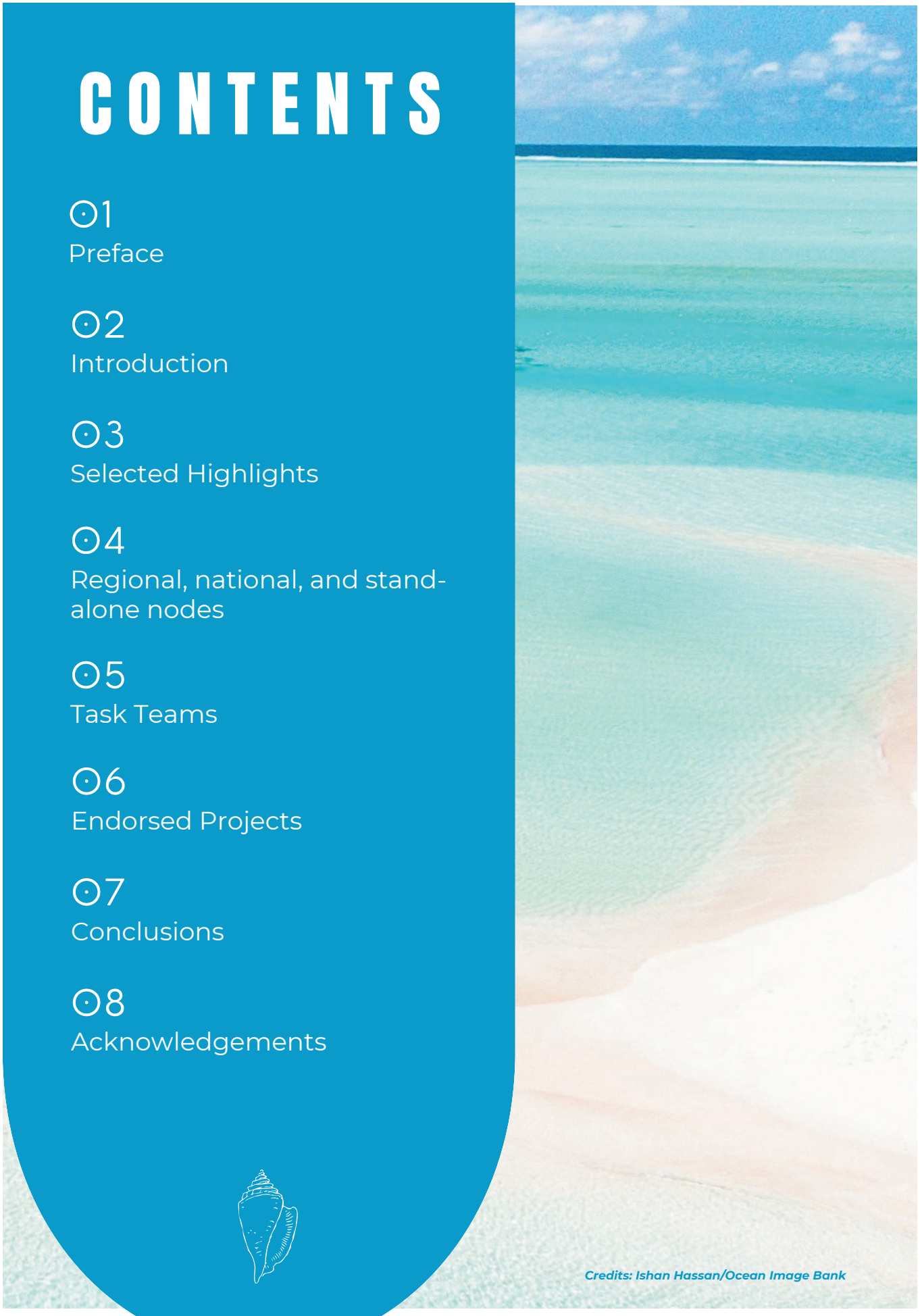
04
Regional, national, and stand-alone nodes

05
Task Teams

06
Endorsed Projects

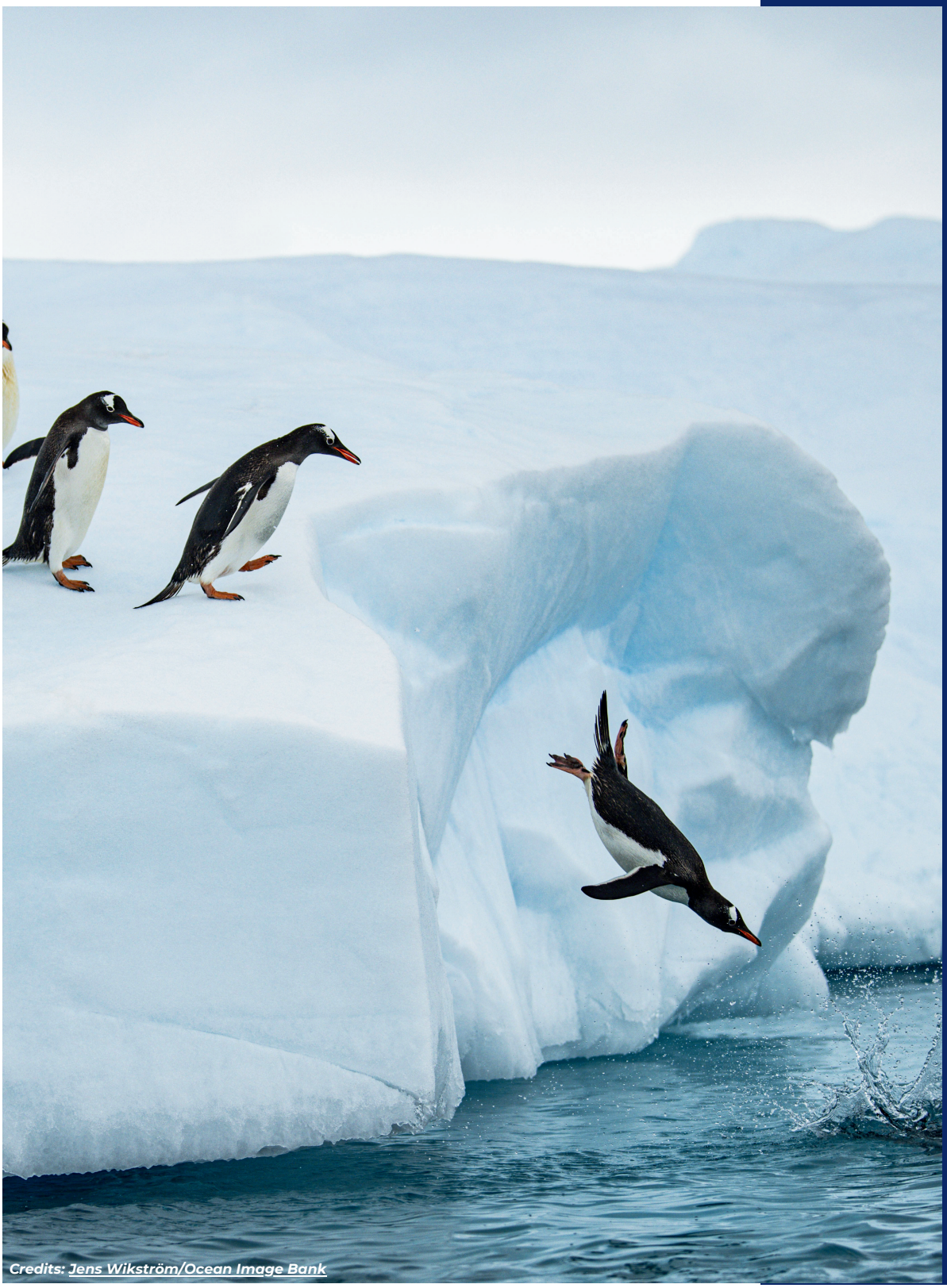
07
Conclusions

08
Acknowledgements



Credits: Ishan Hassan/Ocean Image Bank

1. PREFACE



Credits: Jens Wikström/Ocean Image Bank

Preface by Julian Barbière and Alison Clausen

In 2019, at the First Global Planning Meeting for the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development in Copenhagen, Denmark, a group of early career ocean professionals identified a simple but profound truth: the success of the Ocean Decade would depend on the meaningful inclusion of the next generation of ocean leaders. At that time, neither the term Early Career Ocean Professional, nor the acronym ECOP, existed but from this shared conviction emerged a self-organized movement that would become the Ocean Decade ECOP Programme. In just five years the Programme has grown into the largest global network of early career ocean professionals in ocean science and related fields, and the term ECOP has become widely recognized across the global ocean community.

This remarkable achievement is a testament to the dedication, vision and perseverance of thousands of volunteers around the world. Built organically and with limited resources, the ECOP Programme has demonstrated what is possible when passion, collaboration and a shared commitment to the ocean come together.



Julian Barbière
Coordinator a.i.,
Ocean Decade

Head, Marine Policy &
Regional Coordination
Section

IOC-UNESCO



Alison Clausen

Deputy Coordinator,
Ocean Decade

IOC-UNESCO

Through regional and national nodes, task teams, professional development opportunities and global advocacy, the Programme has created a vibrant, diverse, and inclusive community that empowers ECOPs to contribute meaningfully to ocean sustainability.

The impact of the ECOP Programme on the Ocean Decade has been profound. It has ensured that early career perspectives are embedded across Decade Actions and governance processes, strengthened intergenerational exchange, and brought new ideas, energy and diversity to the collective effort to achieve “The Ocean We Want.” In doing so, the Programme has helped transform the Ocean Decade into a truly inclusive movement—one that recognizes that the leaders of tomorrow must be active partners today. Its influence has also extended well beyond the Decade itself, with ECOPs now playing visible roles in United Nations Ocean Conferences and in many other regional and global initiatives shaping the future of ocean science, policy and action.

The achievements documented in this report are both inspiring and practical. They show how investing in people and networks builds enduring capacity for ocean science, policy and action. They also underscore the essential role of ECOPs in advancing innovation, fostering collaboration across disciplines and sectors, and ensuring that ocean solutions are equitable and sustainable.

On behalf of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, which coordinates the Ocean Decade for the United Nations system, we extend our warmest congratulations to everyone who has contributed to this extraordinary journey: the founders who first raised their voices in Copenhagen; the coordination team, who have worked with professionalism and dedication in the face of often limited resources; the volunteers who have devoted countless hours to building and sustaining the network; the partners and supporters who believed in its vision; and the thousands of ECOPs whose commitment and creativity continue to shape its future.

As we move through the second half of the Decade and in the lead-up to the seminal 2027 Ocean Decade Conference, the importance of the ECOP Programme will only grow. The challenges facing the ocean demand fresh perspectives, bold leadership and strong intergenerational partnerships. Continued support for this Programme is an investment not only in the careers of early career ocean professionals, but in the long-term success and legacy of the Ocean Decade itself.

We thank the ECOP community for its outstanding contributions over the past five years and look forward with confidence to all that you will achieve in the years ahead—for the remainder of the Ocean Decade and far beyond.

Preface by Vladimir Ryabinin

I would like to thank the Early Career Ocean Professionals Programme for kindly inviting me to write a preface to this jubilee report. This remarkable ECOPs movement began in the early 2020s as part of the Ocean Decade during my tenure at the IOC-UNESCO. The ECOP community is truly young and is now celebrating its five-year anniversary. Happy first jubilee and many happy returns!

I've already lived through 14 five-year jubilees, and so at the very beginning, I am tempted to do the same as many of my peers have already done. Dear ECOPs, please try to forgive my generation for leaving you the world as it is today. We hope you can improve it.

Why is not it impossible? It is possible to use science to explain how our planet, the continents, its ocean, and its climate formed and function. Astronomy, dynamics and thermodynamics, mechanics, chemistry and biology, nuclear physics and the theory of relativity form the basis for explaining the evolution of continents, the ocean circulation, the causes of climate change, the predictability of weather for up two weeks in advance, etc. Theory can also be used to explain the evolution of society we are witnessing. Humanity has won the competition against other species on this planet. However, within homo sapiens, fierce competition is still going on.



Dr. Vladimir Ryabinin

Senior International Adviser to the Scripps Institution of Oceanography

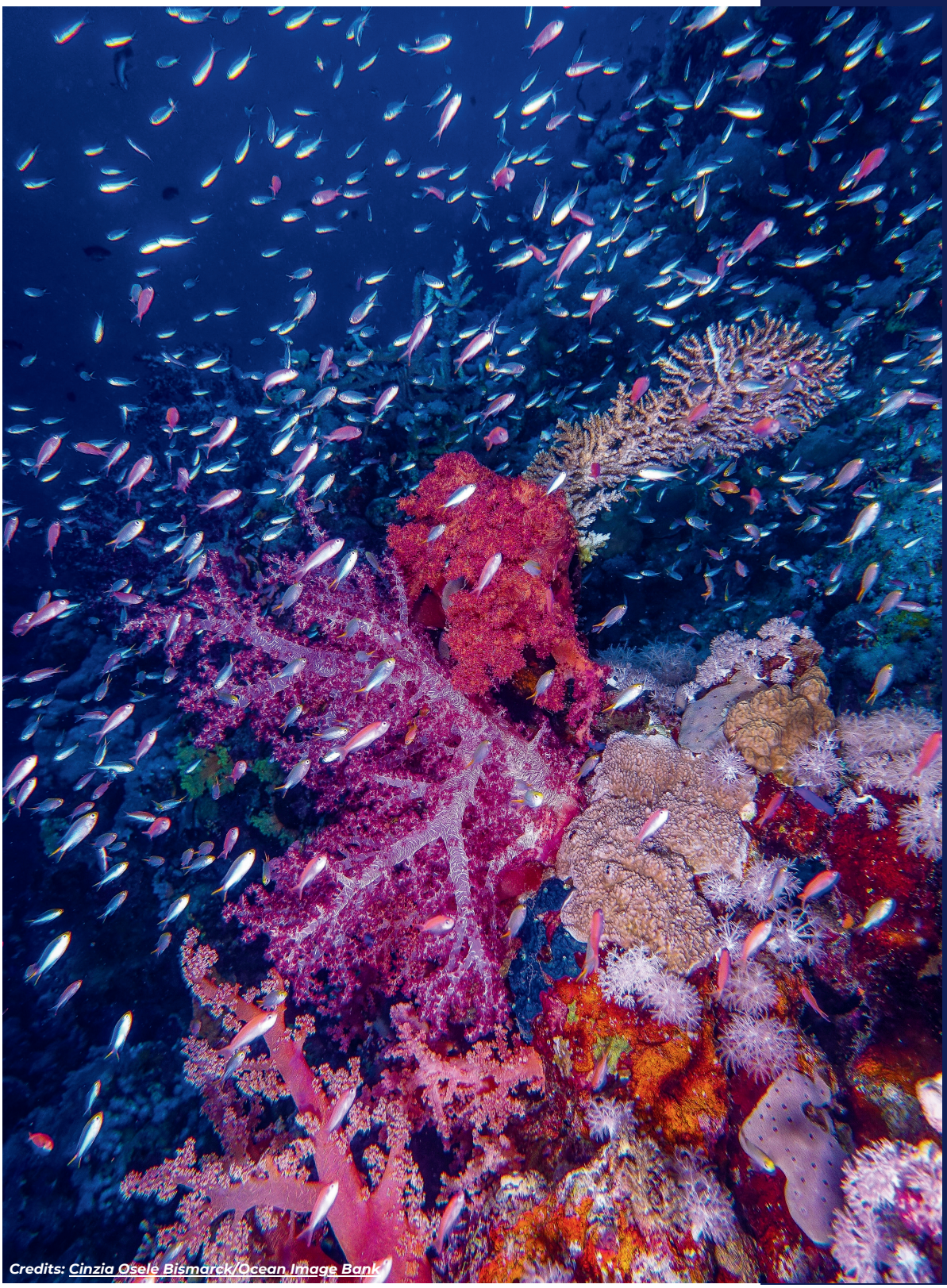
Former Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO

Who is winning? Who seems to be more competitive and reaps the most benefits among individuals? Not the kind, not the generous, not even the smartest, fastest, or strongest. It's the one who can exploit others for their own gain. Just as there is a carbon pump in the ocean, there is a global societal pump that brings to the top those who think primarily of themselves. If we find a way to stop this and create a society where leaders are truly part of people and genuinely care about making everyone happier or, at least, less miserable, we will change our shared destiny.

There is a key prerequisite for this: objectivity in decision-making and, of course, the acceptance and dominance of the goal of making people happy and equal. While this is difficult to imagine on land, it is more plausible in the ocean. The ocean is the common heritage of humankind, and, unlike land, it does not belong to anyone or any single country. It unites people. The second quality of the ocean is that successfully working with it or in it, as an ocean professional, truly requires science, and therefore objectivity. This is why the movement of young ocean professionals is so strategically important. You must work with the ocean, and the ocean, including ocean science, will help you all become better, helping to set our civilization on the right path and giving us the chance to survive and live better. I think it is important that ECOP participants understand and share this simple, yet not so obvious, reflection.

I really admire the various ECOP posters outlining their personal views on the seven societal outcomes of the Ocean Decade. I think adding a peaceful ocean as the eighth outcome of the Decade would be highly desirable. What can further unite this set of diverse outcomes? I see it as the vision of beloved and loving ocean. This is both about the people we need and the ocean we want.

2. INTRODUCTION



Credits: Cinzia Oselé Bismarck/Ocean Image Bank

The ECOP Programme officially stands for the Programme for Early Career Ocean Professionals, officially endorsed as a programme of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (UN Ocean Decade, 2021-2030) following the Call for Decade Actions No. 01/2020. Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO, Paris, France) officially coordinates the Ocean Decade.

Launched in January 2021, the UN Ocean Decade (https://oceandecade.org/) provides a convening framework for a wide range of stakeholders across the world to engage and collaborate outside their traditional communities to trigger a revolution in ocean science. Throughout the Ocean Decade, partners will generate the data, information and knowledge needed for more robust science-informed policies and stronger science-policy interfaces at global, regional, national, and even local levels. By collectively aligning research, investments, and initiatives around a set of common challenges, the Ocean Decade community will contribute to a well-functioning, productive, resilient, sustainable, and inspiring ocean.

The mission of the ECOP Programme is to support early career ocean professionals in their capacity development and work by providing meaningful networking, training, professional development, funding opportunities and creating



Evgeniia Kostianaia, ECOP Programme Global Coordinator

capacity for cooperation and knowledge exchange. For the purpose of the ECOP Programme, an ECOP is a person that self-identifies as being early in their career, within 10 years or less of professional experience in any field related to the ocean. This definition includes post-secondary students and any volunteer roles, so not only employed/paid positions. The term 'professional' is used in order to be inclusive of professionals from various sectors of society. The coordinating team has specifically decided to adopt this flexible definition to allow for individuals with various career paths and life scenarios.

The Programme welcomes professionals from various fields

related to the ocean, including but not limited to: science, business, law, hospitality and tourism, government and public administration, education and training, arts and communications, and fisheries.

I would like to acknowledge the founders of the Programme who laid the foundation of this global movement today. Harriet Harden-Davies served as the first consultant to develop the nascent movement, who gathered a group of 42 ECOPs from around the world, which was called an Informal Working Group (IWG), back in 2019 to pave the way forward. This group has been instrumental in connecting to regional ECOP networks and establishing a constant early career presence in all events related to the Ocean Decade and more broadly to ocean sustainability conversations.

A global survey was launched in 2019 to collect the perspectives of ECOPs to be incorporated into the Ocean Decade Implementation plan. The survey received an overwhelmingly positive response – collecting views from more than 1400 ECOPs from over 100 countries in less than 4 months. This survey and other global consultations identified several broad needs, which were translated into 5 priority areas for ECOP involvement in the Ocean Decade, becoming the basis for the following task teams which drove our work in 2020-2021:

- Network of Networks/Information Portal;
- Training and Mentoring;
- Ocean Literacy;
- Youth Engagement;
- Corporate Sustainability;
- Coordination of ECOP activities.

IWG members, Alfredo Giron-Nava, Erin Satterthwaite, Guillermo Ortuño Crespo, Harriet Harden-Davies, Evgeniia Kostianaia and Taylor Goelz, were tirelessly steering the growing movement until the Programme was officially endorsed by the UN Ocean Decade in June 2021. Evgeniia Kostianaia, IOC-UNESCO Consultant, has been serving as Global Coordinator of the ECOP Programme since August 2021, responsible for strategic coordinating and scoping of global and regional activities of the ECOP Programme, building relationships with strategic partners to support ECOP Programme work, and coordinating collaboration with the UN Ocean Decade system as a whole.



Evgeniia Kostianaia, Erin Satterthwaite, and Harriet Harden-Davies, with Vladimir Ryabinin, back then Executive Secretary of the IOC-UNESCO, at the UN Ocean Decade Executive Planning Group Meeting, 15-17 January, 2020, Paris, France. Credits: ECOP Programme.

As of May 2026, the ECOP Programme consists of 6 regional nodes (Africa, Asia, Caribbean SIDS, Central America, Europe and Pacific

SIDS) and over 60 national nodes (60 countries), 6 Task Teams (Capacity Development, Deep Ocean, DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion), OceanBRIDGES, Ocean Literacy, and Private Industry) and 20 endorsed projects from UN Ocean Decade Calls for Actions. All regional nodes except for the Pacific SIDS have national nodes beneath. Stand-alone nodes are national nodes that do not have a regional node above them, so these are independent national nodes: Canada, USA, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Australia/New Zealand. From an Informal Working Group in 2019, we have grown into a large international network with 9088 members in 168 countries as of May 2026.

All this would have been impossible without the continuous support of our partners and, most importantly, of the IOC-UNESCO, that back in 2019 after the First Global Planning Meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark, made a commitment to support the idea to elevate the voices and role of ECOPs in the UN Ocean Decade. We are also sincerely grateful to the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation for their financial support to the Programme.

This Report highlights our achievements from the moment of our endorsement on June 7, 2021, up until May 2026, and presents our aspirations for the rest of the Decade. It serves as a testament to the tremendous efforts made by our coordinators and members of the ECOP Programme, whose passion for the ocean and dedication to the mission of the ECOP Programme have made this progress possible.

The Report consists of the following sections: Preface; Introduction; Selected Highlights; Regional, national, and stand-alone nodes; Task Teams; Endorsed Projects; Conclusions, and Acknowledgements. You will find that some words are underlined – you can click on the hyperlink if you are reading a digital copy.

We hope that you find this collection of achievements inspiring and calls for action appealing to reach out and start cooperation with us. We invite you now to take this documented journey of five years of achievements with us!

Evgeniia Kostianaia
Global Coordinator,
ECOP Programme

25.05.2026

3. SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS



Credits: Richard Barnden/Ocean Image Bank

In this section you will find a selection of the highlights related to the overall functioning of the ECOP Programme that do not necessarily fall under the work of specific nodes, task teams or endorsed projects.

NORAD funding for online trainings

In 2022, thanks to the generous support of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) and the IOC-UNESCO, the ECOP Programme was able to offer two rounds of funded trainings; the first in March/April 2022 and the second in November 2022. The trainings were required to have particular emphasis on reaching ECOPs from Africa or Caribbean SIDS, and it was imperative that they specifically target ocean-related issues in Africa or Caribbean SIDS. The performed trainings addressed ocean science, ocean governance and ocean sustainability with direct relevance to the Ocean Decade vision, mission, and challenges. Whilst all the trainings adhered to the over-arching objectives of the call, they also covered more detailed topics pertaining to each location and facilitating organization.

The following four free online trainings for ECOPs in Africa and the Caribbean region were held in March and April 2022:

· “Basic Concepts of Ocean Governance for Early Career Ocean Professionals - with a focus on the African Seas” by the International Ocean Institute (IOI);

· “Exploring Pathways to a Vibrant Ocean Economy for Africa” by the Gulf of Guinea Maritime Institute (GoGMI);

· “Marine Spatial Planning” by Diaries of the Ocean;

· “Developing ocean leadership and stewardship in the Caribbean” by SOA/EcoVybz Environmental Creatives.

Additionally, the following ECOPs were provided financial support to cover their expenses for participation fees in capacity development events, directly relevant to the Ocean Decade vision, mission, and challenges:

Sidónio Machaieie from Mozambique was awarded funding to attend the International Indian Ocean Science Conference (IIOSC-2022), an online event designed to translate the knowledge of the 2nd International Indian Ocean Expedition (IIOE-2), a multi-national, multi-institutional programme to advance understanding of the physical, chemical, biological, geological and climatological aspects of the Indian Ocean, and enhance its role on the socio-economy of the region.

Ngozi Oguguah was funded to do an Online Course in Scientific Writing, with the Dr. Anna Clements Researchers’ Writing Academy. This course was designed for researchers who want to publish in high-impact journals without lacking structure in the writing process.

The following online training courses were conducted in November 2022:

· “Basic Concepts of Ocean Governance for Early Career Ocean Professionals, with a focus on the African Seas” by the International Ocean Institute (IOI);
· “Youth in Africa’s Blue Economy: Developing Sustainable Careers and Businesses” by the Gulf of Guinea Maritime Institute (GoGMI);
· “Blue Planning in Practice Training in Caribbean SIDS” by Diaries of the Ocean;
· “Thinking Beyond the Tides: Exploring Marine Science and Innovation in the Caribbean” by SOA/EcoVybz Environmental Creatives.

Participation in global conferences

ECOP Programme has participated in several major global ocean conferences, co-organizing side and satellite events, townhalls, sessions and panels, and having its members share their voices as speakers and panelists. These events allowed us to lead discussions on the topics that are important to ECOPs worldwide: capacity development and its barriers; intersectoral and geopolitical inclusivity in ocean science; ocean literacy; innovation; leadership and networking. Most of the ECOP Programme members met for the first time in person for the UN Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona, Spain, in April 2024, which was an important milestone and supported the team spirit. For each global conference, ECOP Programme communications team creates WhatsApp groups for participants that help them connect with each other, develop cooperation, and overall provide support related to logistics before and after the conference. Such groups were created for 2022 UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon, Portugal; 2024 UN Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona, Spain; One Ocean Science Congress and the 2025 UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France; and 2026 Ocean Sciences Meeting in Glasgow, Scotland. These WhatsApp group chats are still active and are used for sharing of information and opportunities.

Below you will find summaries of our most considerable presence at the programme level at the 2024 UN Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona, Spain; 2025 UN Ocean Conference and the preceding One Ocean Science Congress in Nice, France; and 2026 Ocean Sciences Meeting in Glasgow, Scotland.

1. UN Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona, Spain, April 2024

ECOP Programme co-organized 5 satellite events with the global team, with another 5 co-organized by the endorsed projects, task teams and nodes. The 5 satellite events co-organized by the global team were:

· “Capacity development for the Ocean we want: exploring science communication and solving capacity development challenges”;

· “Diving from local to global Ocean Literacy: Exploring, sharing, and developing successful practices to know, feel and join the living Ocean”;

· “The inclusivity we need for the Ocean we want”;

· “Gathering forces for science-policy nexus, innovation, and funding”;

· “Building ocean leadership: fostering networking, creativity, and resilience”.

The conference impact report compiled by Natalie Fox is available here: https://tinyurl.com/6prfaura.

2. One Ocean Science Congress and the Third UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France, June 2025

ECOP Programme global team co-organized or was involved in the following events:

· A whole day of programming at the European Digital Ocean Pavilion in the UNOC Green Zone: events on ocean data, citizen science, ECOP Programme and youth networks;

· Event “Strengthening Asia’s Ocean Science-Policy-Society Interface: Regional Priorities and Tangible Actions with ECOPs”;

· Townhall at the One Ocean Science Congress: “Capacity Development in the UN Ocean Decade ECOP Programme: successes, challenges, and ways forward”;

· Event “Trade, Innovation, and Capacity Building: Engaging Early Career Ocean Professionals in a Sustainable Blue Economy”, co-organized by ECOP Programme and International Ocean Institute at the UNCTAD Pavilion of the UNOC Green Zone;



ECOP Programme members at the UN Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona, Spain, April 2024. Credits: ECOP Programme.

· Event “4 years of the UN Ocean Decade ECOP Programme: Achievements, Insights and Ways Ahead” in the UNOC Green Zone;

· Event “1 Ocean, 7 Voices, 7 Continents: Collective Youth Action for SDG14”, in the UNOC Green Zone;

· Event “Right Right Right! Widening ocean literacy to best support ocean sustainability transition” co-organized by IPOS, in the UNOC Green Zone;

· Event “Youth Takes Action”, at the European Digital Ocean Pavilion in the UNOC Green Zone.

You can check this page for a more detailed overview of all the events run by the ECOP Programme: https://www.ecopdecade.org/unoc3/.

3. Ocean Sciences Meeting in Glasgow, Scotland, UK, February 2026

ECOP Programme organized the session “The UN Ocean Decade Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOP) Programme: Benefits and how to get involved”, which was attended by about 140 people. The presenters explained the benefits of being involved in the ECOP Programme and the exact pathways to do so. The following paper was produced based on this event: *Franco-Santos, R.M., Habib, J., Kostianaia, E., Li, S. and Krauzig, N. (2026), How to Get Involved with and Benefit from the UN Ocean Decade Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOP) Programme. - Limnology and Oceanography Bulletin.*

In all these conferences the ECOP Programme organized informal gatherings for dinner, which helped establish new connections and strengthened the team. These networking events have become the hallmark of the ECOP Programme, supporting ECOPs attending global conferences thus providing them with a sense of close, peer community. This has been essential for those who took part in such large conferences for the first time.



ECOP Programme informal gathering in Nice, France, June 2025. Credits: ECOP Programme.

Reports and papers

Various nodes of the ECOP Programme have produced regional and national reports based on the analysis of their surveys and the challenges of ECOPs in their region or country. They provide valuable insights into the diverse and specific needs of ECOPs and help steer the overall strategic plan of the ECOP Programme as well as help identify regional and national priorities. All reports are available here: https://www.ecopdecade.org/ecopreports/.

ECOP Programme members have written numerous articles and papers about the work of the ECOP Programme, importance of youth and ECOPs inclusion in ocean work

and related dialogues and processes, ECOPs' needs and challenges, and their perspectives on the UN Ocean Decade. A collection of these publications in scientific journals and magazines can be found here: https://www.ecopdecade.org/ecop-highlights/ecop-publications/.

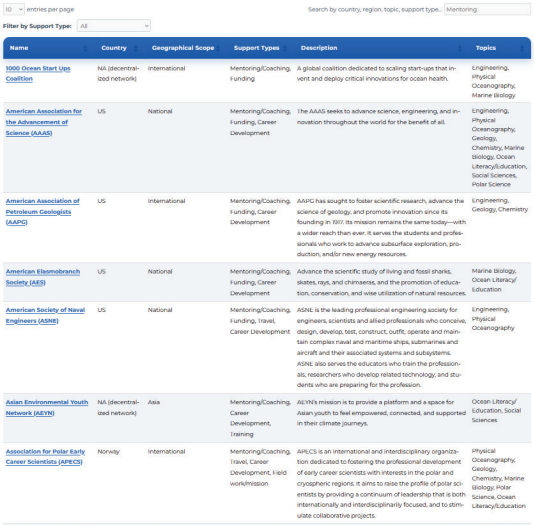
Databases

The ECOP Programme has created several databases freely available on the ECOP Programme website in the attempt to compile valuable information for easy access in one place. This effort allows ECOPs to find important opportunities to upscale their career, expand their network and develop collaborations worldwide.

1. Ocean Networks

This directory showcases a global list of ocean-related and ocean-focused communities: organizations, networks, groups and programmes providing opportunities for youth and ECOPs. The aim is to improve visibility of such opportunities, and to support participation and engagement of the youth and ECOPs across the global ocean landscape. One can also submit an additional group, network, organisation or programme to this list, using the form at the bottom of the page: https://www.ecopdecade.org/opportunities/ocean-networks/.

This directory was created by the ECOP Programme and its update is a joint effort with the initiative GEO Blue Planet, generously supported by the project EU4OceanObs and implemented by Mercator Ocean International.

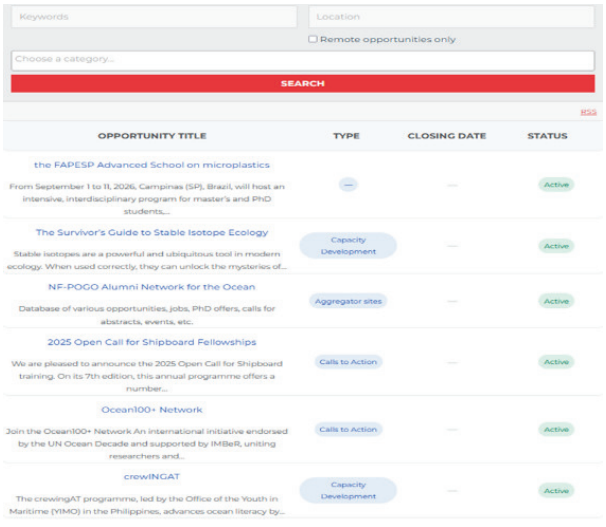


Name	Country	Geographical Scope	Support Types	Description	Topics
1000 Ocean Start Ups Coalition	NA (decentralized network)	International	Mentoring/Coaching, Funding	A global coalition dedicated to scaling start-ups that invent and deploy critical innovations for ocean health.	Engineering, Physical Oceanography, Marine Biology
American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)	US	National	Mentoring/Coaching, Funding, Career Development	The AAAS seeks to advance science, engineering, and innovation throughout the world for the benefit of all.	Engineering, Physical Oceanography, Geology, Chemistry, Marine Biology, Ocean Literacy/Education, Social Sciences, Polar Science
American Association of Petroleum Geologists (AAPG)	US	International	Mentoring/Coaching, Funding, Career Development	AAPG has sought to foster scientific research, advance the science of geology, and promote innovation since its founding in 1917. Its mission remains the same today—with a wider reach than ever. It serves the students and professionals who work to advance subsurface exploration, production, and/or new energy resources.	Engineering, Geology, Chemistry
American Elasmobranch Society (AES)	US	National	Mentoring/Coaching, Funding, Career Development	Advance the scientific study of living and fossil sharks, skates, rays, and chimaeras, and the promotion of education, conservation, and wise utilization of natural resources.	Marine Biology, Ocean Literacy/ Education
American Society of Naval Engineers (ASNE)	US	National	Mentoring/Coaching, Funding, Travel, Career Development	ASNE is the leading professional engineering society for engineers, scientists and allied professionals who conceive, design, develop, test, construct, outfit, operate and maintain complex naval and maritime ships, submarines and aircraft and their associated systems and subsystems. ASNE also serves the educators who train the professionals, researchers who develop related technology, and students who are preparing for the profession.	Engineering, Physical Oceanography
Asian Environmental Youth Network (AEYN)	NA (decentralized network)	Asia	Mentoring/Coaching, Career Development, Training	AEYN's mission is to provide a platform and a space for Asian youth to feel empowered, connected, and supported in their climate journeys.	Ocean Literacy/ Education, Social Sciences
Association for Polar Early Career Scientists (APECS)	Norway	International	Mentoring/Coaching, Travel, Career Development, Field work/mission	APECS is an international and interdisciplinary organization dedicated to fostering the professional development of early career scientists with interests in the polar and cryospheric regions. It aims to raise the profile of polar scientists by providing a continuum of leadership that is both internationally and interdisciplinarily focused, and to stimulate collaborative projects.	Physical Oceanography, Geology, Chemistry, Marine Biology, Polar Science, Ocean Literacy/Education

Screenshot of the Ocean Network directory on the ECOP Programme website.

2. Database of Opportunities

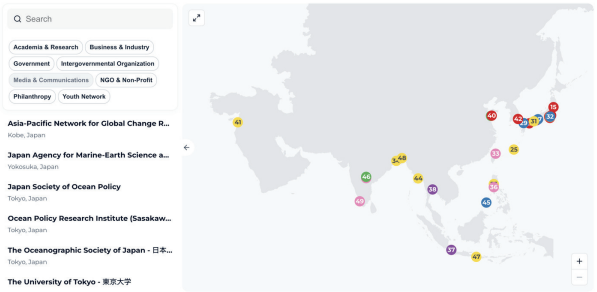
This directory aims to provide actual opportunities for ECOPs in a wide range of categories: access to infrastructure, aggregator sites, awards, calls to action, conferences, fellowship, funding, internships/jobs/consultancies, ocean literacy, onboarding expeditions, professional networks and community building, trainings/workshops, travel grants, webinars. The database is now being synchronized with the Ocean Connector, the Ocean Decade's platform to advance capacity development in ocean science.



Screenshot of the Database of Opportunities on the ECOP Programme website.

3. Ocean Stakeholders Map for Asia

This georeferenced map is designed to highlight key ocean stakeholders, projects, and initiatives across Asia. You can conduct a detailed search by country, city, sector, or keyword. The pilot project focused on Japan and was later expanded to the other countries in Asia. The initial setup of this project was generously supported by the Japan Society of Ocean Policy (JSOP) and the Nippon Foundation.



Screenshot of the Ocean Stakeholders Map for Asia on the ECOP Programme website.

Communications and outreach

Our work on communications has been instrumental in promoting opportunities globally, sharing ECOPs' experience and highlighting ECOPs' achievements, attracting new members and hopefully inspiring younger generations to choose ocean related careers. A strong working relationship has been developed with the Decade Coordination Unit Communications team, which has enabled ECOP Programme highlights and events to be shared on the UN Ocean Decade official communications platforms and supported visibility of the Programme's efforts.

Thanks to our communications and outreach campaigns, the ECOP Programme regularly collaborates with international and regional organizations to recommend ECOPs for speaker and expert roles for various events and working groups.

We deeply acknowledge the great work of the many professionals who have contributed over the years to the development of ECOP Programme global communications activities and the website creation, maintenance, and upgrade: Carlos Alonso Torres, Taylor Goelz, Huimin Cao, Natalie Fox, Annabel Keerd, Mhairi Chandler, Olivia Grech, Joelle Habib, Sagar Kalra, Manon Hetsch, and Roman Puydo.

1. Website

The official Programme website (https://www.ecopdecade.org/) was re-designed in December 2021 from its original version with the aim to become the main informational portal of the Programme. It has

considerably grown over the years and currently features sections on the UN Ocean Decade and its Calls for Decade Actions; our work (information about our regional, national, and stand-alone nodes, task teams, and a collection of our reports); opportunities (databases, internships and events); communications campaigns (ECOP Voices).

2. Newsletter and Global Registry

The most representative indicator of the ECOP Programme engagement is the Global Registry, which currently stands at 9088 ECOPs from 168 countries. This global database has an ECOP's name, country/territory, research/work area, affiliation, and contact details. It has a filtering system to help us identify and extract subsets of ECOPs by region and/or country. This is regularly used to send targeted emails with calls and invitations to join conferences, task teams, and working and expert groups. The link to subscribe to our monthly newsletter is: https://tinyurl.com/4m4yb2av.

Subscription allows to receive our monthly newsletter and stay updated with the Programme news, opportunities, events, and calls. It features various opportunities, calls, announcements, news both at the global, regional and national levels and also shares the same from our partners around the world. In the same subscription form, one can also opt to be automatically added to the Global Registry.

3. Social media channels

ECOP Programme has a significant online presence on LinkedIn, Instagram, X, Facebook, with a considerable portfolio of webinars hosted on our YouTube channel. These social media channels are used to share news and opportunities of the nodes, task teams and endorsed projects of the ECOP Programme, as well as updates on our global developments, and various announcements of other organizations worldwide, including news of the UN Ocean Decade.

Our LinkedIn page is the largest channel by membership, with the 30,000 followers milestone reached in June 2026. Nodes, task teams and endorsed projects might have their separate accounts, and this information can be found in their respective sections of this Report.

4. Communications campaigns

Our communications team has run various campaigns to showcase the diverse activities of ECOPs working in the ocean space. Highlighting their research, approaches and passion for the ocean has been of paramount importance in sharing the diverse perspectives of new generations of ocean professionals. These campaigns include:

ECOP Stories – promoting the work of ECOPs in a written interview (check out the stories here: https://www.ecopdecade.org/ecopstories/);

- **ECOP Conversations** – highlighting the career paths of ECOPs in an actual podcast-style interview in Zoom (check out the conversations here: https://www.ecopdecade.org/ecopconversations/);

- **My Coastline** – featuring ECOPs presenting themselves about their work on coastal challenges (check out the submissions here: https://www.ecopdecade.org/my-coastline/);

- **ECOPs Envision** – showcasing ECOPs' vision for the UN Ocean Decade Outcomes (check out what ECOPs envision for specific Outcomes here: https://www.ecopdecade.org/ecops-envision/);

- **Decade ECOPs** – underlining the perspectives of ECOPs and their work related to the 10 UN Ocean Decade Challenges (check out the featured profiles here: https://www.ecopdecade.org/decade-ecops/).

Significant collaboration started in 2021 on **V.ECOP Day(s)** in a successful partnership with the German Marine Research Consortium (KDM) and other partners. This is a series of virtual and in-person events and interviews with ECOPs, done by ECOPs, happening around large international conferences, such as 2021 and 2024 UN Ocean Decade Conferences and 2025 UN Ocean Conference: https://vecop.net/.

Communication Channels

https://www.instagram.com/ecop_programme/

https://www.linkedin.com/company/early-career-ocean-professionals

https://www.facebook.com/ecopprogramme/

https://x.com/OceanDecadeECOP

http://www.youtube.com/@ecopprogramme

4. REGIONAL, NATIONAL, AND STAND-ALONE NODES



Credits: Gaby Barathieu/Ocean Image Bank

5 Years in Review

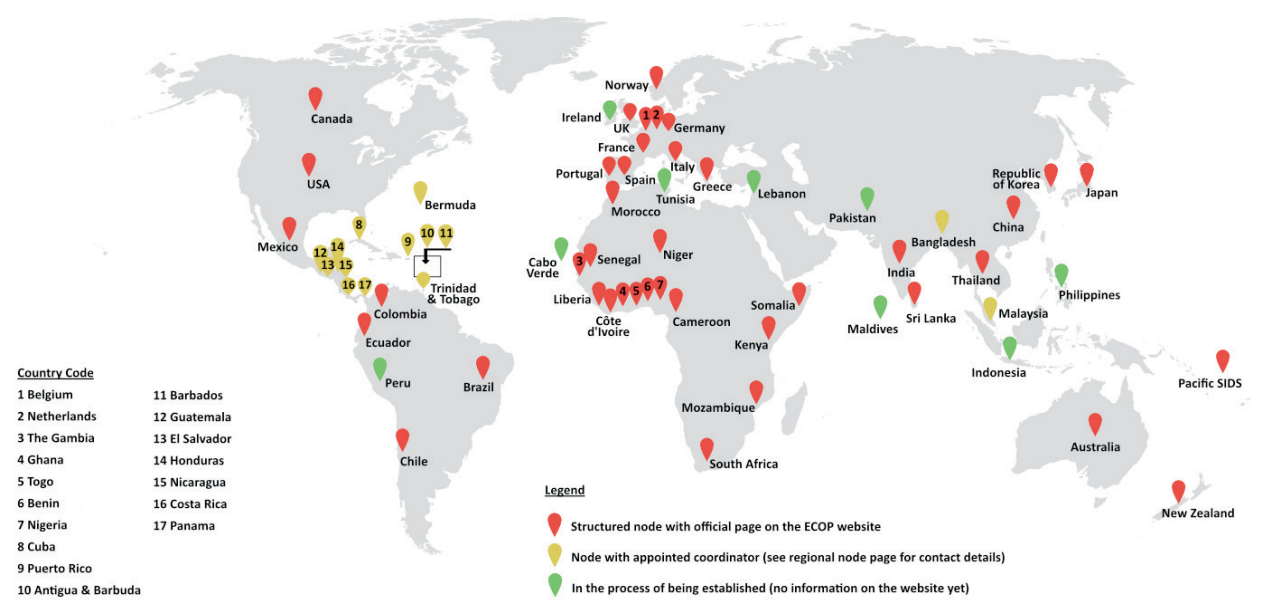
Regional nodes

6

National nodes

60

and more to come !



In this section, you will find contributions from the coordination teams of our 6 regional nodes (Africa, Asia, Carribean SIDS, Central America, Europe, Pacific SIDS) and national nodes within Africa, Asia, Central America, and Europe; and our stand-alone nodes: Canada, USA, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Australia/New Zealand. For the reader's convenience, we have grouped the nodes by bigger regions: Americas, Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific Region, so that it will be easier for you to find the country/region you are most interested in.

AMERICAS

- ECOP Canada
- ECOP Caribbean
- ECOP Central America
- ECOP Chile
- ECOP Colombia
- ECOP Ecuador
- ECOP USA



Credits: Lars von Ritter Zahony/Ocean Image Bank

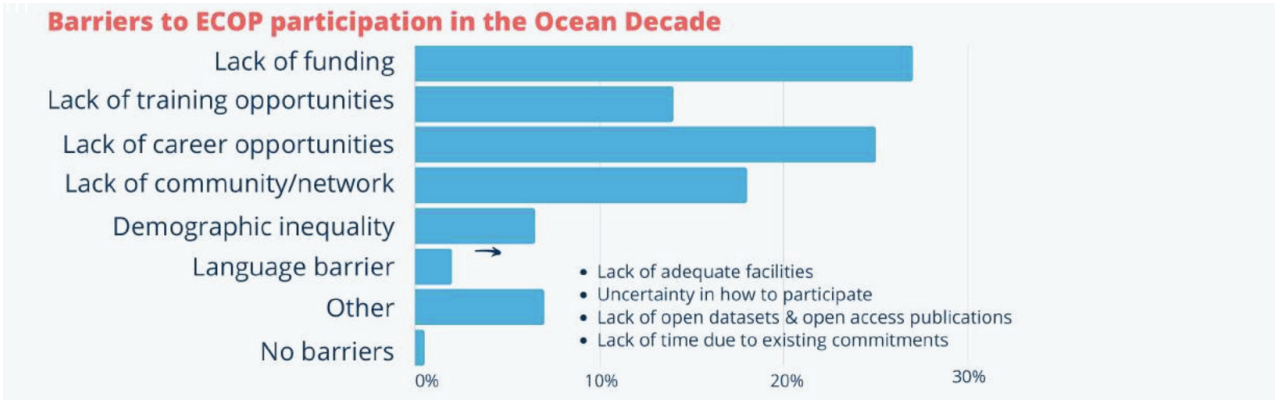
ECOP Canada

Introduction

ECOP Canada began in 2021 as the first national node of the ECOP Programme. It was founded by Neha Acharya-Patel, Samantha McBeth, and Ronnie Noonan-Birch, who formed the initial Steering Committee (2021–2023). The node was previously housed and supported by Tula House Foundation and in September 2024, the Students on Ice (SOI) Foundation became the administrative home, with support from Blue Futures Pathways (BFP).

ECOP Canada aims to strengthen the diverse voices of ECOPs and advance intergenerational equity in Canada's ocean sector. Its mission is to create opportunities to connect, learn, and collaborate, while also supporting pathways into and within ocean careers and contributing to Canada's sustainable blue economy.

The challenges faced by ECOPs in Canada have been identified through ECOP Canada's early engagement and research, including findings captured in the 2022–2023 national report. These challenges are summarized in the illustration below and reflect key barriers experienced by ECOPs, including limited access to funding and opportunities, unclear career pathways, and the need for stronger connections across regions and sectors.



Key challenges faced by early career ocean professionals in Canada (ECOP Canada, 2022–2023).
Credits: ECOP Canada Report 2022-2023.

What is ECOPs Canada's role in the ecosystem ?

ECOP Canada fills a critical gap between youth engagement and long-term career participation in the ocean sector. By supporting individuals within the first 10 years of their careers, the node provides a platform for community and access to opportunities. Its approach combines network-building with tangible supports such as micro-grants, mentorship, and access to conferences and policy spaces, enabling ECOPs to actively participate in ocean science, policy, and practice.

The current Coordinator is Volita Yego. Previous coordination includes Ashley Bowes (National Coordinator) and Aneri Garg (Program Assistant). The 2023–2025 Steering Committee includes Frankie Marquez, Jovana Kornicer, and Laura Hernandez Merlano, who continued the work of the founding Steering Committee.

Our partnerships have evolved and changed over time but a list of past and present partners include: Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), Canadian Ocean Literacy Coalition, MEOPAR, Ocean Networks Canada, SOA, Ocean Wise, Tula Foundation, Canada's Ocean Supercluster, COAST Ocean Innovation Hub, Students on Ice Foundation.

Impact

Main achievements

ECOP Canada's key achievements reflect both the growth of the network and the development of opportunities for ECOPs. Established in 2021 as the first national ECOP Programme node, ECOP Canada began by convening early engagement activities, including a national workshop on ECOP participation in the Ocean Decade (2022), which brought together early career professionals and stakeholders to identify priorities, challenges, and opportunities for ECOP engagement in Canada, helping to inform early network direction and areas of focus, as well as a webinar on reconciliation and Indigenous perspectives. In 2023, ECOP Canada strengthened its presence in national and international spaces through participation in COP15, ArcticNet ASM, and IMPAC5, where a delegation of 15 ECOPs was supported to attend, increasing early career representation in global ocean discussions. This momentum continued in 2024 through co-hosting a satellite event at the UN Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona (Waves of Change) and launching the Microplastics Ambassador Program in partnership with SOA.

Building on this foundation, 2025 marked an expansion of direct support through the ECOP Canada Ambassador Program, which supported 18 ECOPs and distributed microgrants to enable participation in conferences, professional development, and ECOP-led initiatives. These activities reached over 10,000 people through workshops, presentations, and storytelling, demonstrating both national and community-level impact. Notable initiatives included hands-on workshops, knowledge-sharing sessions, and local engagement activities that translated ocean issues into accessible, community-driven actions. ECOP Canada also hosted its first in-person national mixer in Victoria (~50 participants), strengthening connections across the network, and delivered a career pathways workshop in partnership with SOI Foundations Blue Futures Pathways at H2O Halifax (~40 participants), focused on navigating

careers in the sustainable blue economy. ECOPs were further supported to engage in policy and international dialogue, including representation at the All-Atlantic Ocean Research and Innovation Alliance (AAORIA) Forum in partnership with Fisheries and Oceans Canada. In addition, broader engagement in ocean literacy initiatives reached approximately 900 participants, contributing to increased awareness and participation in ocean-related issues across Canada.





ECOP Canada participation at the 5th International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5) and in-person community mixer at the COAST Ocean Innovation Hub in Victoria, illustrating both global engagement and national community-building efforts (2023–2025). Credits: Amanda Gove, SOI Foundation.

Highlighted activities

ECOP Canada continues to deliver a range of ongoing activities through both direct programming and partnerships. Central to this is the Ambassador Program, which provides microgrants to support ECOP-led initiatives, professional development, and participation in key events, enabling ECOPs to take on leadership roles and drive national and international impact. In addition, ECOP Canada facilitates access to opportunities through partnerships, including conference participation and discounted registrations, helping to reduce financial barriers and increase ECOP presence in national and international spaces. The node also plays an active role in sharing opportunities related to jobs, funding, training, and leadership through its digital platforms, ensuring ECOPs remain informed and connected. This is further supported by a virtual community on Slack, which serves as a central space for ongoing engagement, peer exchange, and the dissemination of opportunities, events, and resources across the network.



ECOP Canada Ambassador Program in action, supporting ECOP-led initiatives in Canada and internationally, including community-based workshops and participation in the PICES Conference. Credits: Grace Melchers.

Reflections

ECOP Canada has helped bring together a previously dispersed early career ocean community into a more connected and opportunity-driven network across the country. Through a combination of community-building and partnership support, ECOPs are increasingly engaging not just as participants, but as active contributors to the ocean sector. Through funding we have reduced financial barriers, enabling ECOPs to attend conferences, lead initiatives, and access national and international spaces.

This growing community and the support we have received has led to increased visibility of ECOP voices and greater participation in knowledge-sharing and leadership. At the same time, the work has highlighted ongoing gaps, particularly in sustaining engagement across Canada's geography and in supporting ECOPs beyond early entry stages. However overall, ECOP Canada demonstrates how a partnership-driven, network-based approach can strengthen early career engagement while building a foundation for long-term impact.

Plans ahead

Looking ahead to 2030 and beyond, ECOP Canada aims to build on its current foundation by expanding both the scale and reach of its programming. This includes scaling microgrants and ECOP-led initiatives to meet growing demand and increase accessibility across regions. A key priority is the establishment of regional ECOP hubs across Canada to enable sustained engagement and leadership development. ECOP Canada also aims to strengthen international collaboration by identifying partners and funders to support exchanges and joint initiatives across ECOP nodes. In addition, the node will focus on developing practical tools, such as mentorship pathways, to support long-term career development within the ocean sector. Increasing ECOP participation in policy and decision-making spaces remains a priority to advance intergenerational equity, alongside strengthening coordination capacity and partnerships to ensure the long-term sustainability and scalability of the network beyond the Ocean Decade.

Communication Channels

https://www.instagram.com/ecopcanada/

https://www.linkedin.com/in/ecopcanada/

canada@ecopdecade.org

Join our Slack channel and stay connected:
https://soifoundation.org/en/ecop/

ECOP Caribbean

Introduction

The Node for the Caribbean region was launched in November of 2022. The mission of the ECOP Caribbean node is to expand equitable access to professional development, research opportunities, and regional collaboration for Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs) across Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS). This mission is grounded in addressing the structural barriers that limit Caribbean ECOP participation in global ocean science and conservation, particularly the persistent lack of funding, limited institutional support, and restricted access to international networks and training opportunities.

In the Caribbean context, these challenges are especially acute. Many ECOPs face financial constraints that prevent them from attending conferences, participating in internships, or accessing advanced research facilities. Additionally, geographic fragmentation and uneven institutional capacity across island nations contribute to isolation and reduced visibility in global ECOP databases and initiatives.

To address these issues, ECOP Caribbean focuses on increasing regional visibility and participation by actively growing the number of Caribbean ECOPs in global networks and conducting a comprehensive needs assessment to identify priority gaps. A central component of the node's work is facilitating access to opportunities beyond the region, particularly in North America, by sharing information about placements in universities, marine laboratories, and aquariums, and by working with partners to reduce financial barriers such as housing, transportation, and meal costs. These efforts directly target the core issue of limited funding, which often prevents Caribbean ECOPs from taking advantage of otherwise available opportunities.

The node also prioritizes building sustainable support systems within the region. This includes creating mentorship networks that connect ECOPs with experienced researchers, establishing national points of contact, and developing communication platforms to share opportunities and coordinate responses to shared challenges. Convening regional workshops and supporting attendance at key fisheries and marine conservation conferences further strengthens professional networks and knowledge exchange.

Collaboration with Latin American and U.S. partners is another strategic pillar, enabling resource sharing and integration into broader scientific communities while advocating for more inclusive participation structures.

This work is critically important for the Caribbean because the region is

both highly dependent on marine ecosystems and disproportionately vulnerable to ocean-related challenges such as climate change, overfishing, and coastal degradation. Strengthening the capacity of Caribbean ECOPs is therefore not only a matter of professional equity but also essential for building local expertise to address pressing environmental issues. By tackling the underlying constraint of limited funding and access to opportunities, ECOP Caribbean is working to ensure that the region's emerging ocean professionals can actively contribute to and lead marine science and conservation efforts both regionally and globally.

Coordinators and main partners

- Dr. Dayne Buddo - Chief Caribbean Regional Node Coordinator
- Sheyla Ravelo Perez - Deputy Caribbean Regional Node Coordinator & Cuba National Node Coordinator
- Ruleo A Camacho - Antigua & Barbuda National Coordinator
- Ali Hochberg - Bermuda National Coordinator
- Claudia Muñoz Colón - Puerto Rico National Coordinator
- Richmond Basant - Trinidad & Tobago Coordinator
- Osato Iyahen - Barbados Coordinator

The main partner is: IOCARIBE & Discover70 Foundation, Inc.

Impact

Main achievements

A key achievement was facilitation of two fully funded field components in Jamaica (2023 and 2024) in partnership with Savannah State University, a U.S.-based HBCU. These field experiences, delivered through SSU's Tropical Marine Ecology course in partnership with Georgia Aquarium, created a unique bridge between Caribbean ECOPs and the Caribbean diaspora in North America. Participants were not only immersed in hands-on marine science training but were also exposed to a range of Jamaican research institutions and conservation initiatives. The course was developed and taught by Dr Buddo, Sheyla Ravelo Perez taught the science communication course. This demonstrates how strategic collaboration with U.S. partners can mobilize external resources into the Caribbean while strengthening regional identity, networks, and scientific capacity. Critically, by fully funding participation, the program directly addressed the financial barriers that typically exclude ECOPs from such experiences.



2023 Savannah State University Senior Students visit Jamaica as part of their Tropical Marine Ecology course with funding provided by the Georgia Aquarium - Watershed in Saint Ann, Jamaica. Credits: Sheyla Ravelo Perez.

At the regional scale, ECOP Caribbean contributed to knowledge generation and representation through the publication of the 2023 Latin American and Caribbean ECOP Survey, which was presented at the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference. This survey provided critical data on the needs, challenges, and priorities of ECOPs in the region, reinforcing the central finding that lack of funding and opportunities remains the dominant constraint.

Capacity building at the local level has been advanced through Dr. Buddo's scuba diving training initiatives, supported by Discover70 Foundation. In 2025, the first training camp successfully certified seven ECOPs, with an additional twelve ECOPs expected to be certified in 2026. These certifications are not only professional qualifications but also expand access to field-based marine research and conservation work, which is often restricted by both cost and certification requirements.



ECOP Open Water Certification Camp, 2025. Credits: Dr. Dayne Buddo.

Beyond these programs, Dr. Buddo's broader impact on the ECOP community has been substantial. Through extensive research, regional diplomacy, and sustained engagement across Caribbean countries, he has played a key role in strengthening collaboration between institutions, governments, and ECOPs. His work has helped unlock opportunities by building strategic partnerships and advocating for the inclusion of Caribbean ECOPs in regional and international initiatives. This type of coordination is particularly critical in the Caribbean context, where access to opportunities are often constrained by limited funding and fragmented institutional networks.

Mentorship and global engagement have also been a defining area of impact. In 2025, Sheyla Ravelo Perez served as North American Delegation Coordinator for Nausicaá's Citizens of the Ocean Initiative, where she provided mentorship and training that directly contributed to the development of the Citizen of the Ocean Youth Manifesto. This manifesto was recognized as a key outcome of the UN Ocean Conference 2025. In parallel, her co-authorship of the Youth Guide to International Ocean Conferences has provided a practical resource to help ECOPs, particularly those from underrepresented regions like the Caribbean, navigate and access global ocean policy spaces more effectively.





Nausicaá's Citizens of the Ocean World Youth Forum, Boulogne Sur Mer, France. Credits: Nausicaá Aquarium.

Dayne and Sheyla have contributed extensively to international discourse surrounding the Ocean Decade through participation in numerous conference panels, task teams, and advisory committees. These engagements have elevated Caribbean ECOP visibility and ensured that regional challenges are represented in international conversations.



Sheyla Ravelo Perez representing Cuba while speaking on a Geopolitical Inclusivity Panel at the 2024 UN Ocean Decade Conference, Barcelona, Spain, April 2024. Credits: ECOP Programme.



Dr. Buddo speaking on behalf of Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism at a workshop in Suriname held by the Suriname Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the High Seas Alliance, 2026. Credits: Suriname Ministry of Foreign Affairs & High Seas Alliance.

Ongoing activities

The node continues to prioritize opportunity-sharing mechanisms, capacity building initiatives, and partnerships with institutions in North and Latin America. Ongoing efforts to reduce participation barriers like advocating for funded placements and logistical support remain central. The development of communication platforms and regional coordination structures is also actively underway to strengthen intra-Caribbean collaboration.

Reflections

There is clear evidence that the node's work is beginning to shift the landscape for Caribbean ECOPs. Increased participation in international programs, improved access to training and certifications, and stronger representation in global forums all point to meaningful progress. Importantly, these outcomes consistently trace back to interventions that address financial and access barriers.

This progress has taken place within a particularly challenging regional context. Caribbean ECOPs and the node itself operate under the recurring disruptions caused by natural disasters, including hurricanes and other climate-related events, which can significantly impact livelihoods, infrastructure, and continuity of professional development opportunities. These realities further exacerbate existing funding and access constraints, making sustained engagement more difficult.

Despite remaining systematic challenges, the node has demonstrated that targeted, partnership-driven efforts can create immediate and measurable impact. By continuing to focus on reducing funding-related constraints and expanding access to opportunities, ECOP Caribbean is contributing to a more inclusive and capable ECOP community in the region.



2024 Savannah State University Senior students participate in a coastal cleanup of Whitehouse Marine Sanctuary in partnership with Georgia Aquarium and Sandals Foundation - Westmoreland, Jamaica.
Credits: Sheyla Ravelo Perez.

Plans ahead

A major priority for ECOP Caribbean is leveraging the continued development of Discover70 Foundation, a nonprofit founded by Dr. Dayne Buddo to advance marine conservation, research, and capacity building. While Discover70 Foundation was not originally established specifically for the ECOP Programme, its growth now provides a critical institutional platform that can significantly expand and sustain ECOP Caribbean's work in the region.

The formalization of Discover70 Foundation as a 501(c)(3) organization creates an opportunity to address one of the most persistent challenges facing Caribbean ECOPs: the lack of stable funding and institutional infrastructure. By aligning with an established nonprofit entity, the Caribbean node is better positioned to access grants, develop long-term partnerships, and implement structured, funded programs at scale.

Through this alignment, ECOP Caribbean aims to:

- Expand access to fully funded training and capacity-building programs, including technical certifications and field-based learning opportunities.

- Support the development of consistent funding streams to sustain national node

coordinators across Caribbean countries, strengthening local engagement and continuity.

- Facilitate greater participation of Caribbean ECOPs in regional and international research, training, and policy spaces by covering key cost barriers.

This approach reflects a shift from opportunistic support toward a more durable, systems-level solution, embedding ECOP engagement within an organization capable of sustaining long-term investment in people and programs.

Calls for Action

ECOP Caribbean invites partnerships with academic institutions, research organizations, NGOs, and funders interested in advancing equitable access to ocean science and conservation. There is a particular need for collaborators who can co-develop funded opportunities and reduce structural barriers for Caribbean ECOPs, especially those related to travel, cost of living, and participation logistics.

Additionally, there is a call for institutions, particularly in North America and Latin America, to deepen engagement with the Caribbean by intentionally creating accessible pathways for ECOP participation.

This includes not only offering opportunities, but ensuring they are financially and logistically attainable.

Finally, sustained investment in regional coordination remains essential. Supporting national-level leadership and strengthening regional networks will be key to ensuring that Caribbean ECOPs are not only included in the Ocean Decade, but are meaningfully shaping its outcomes.

By leveraging the institutional capacity of Discover70 Foundation alongside strategic partnerships, ECOP Caribbean is working toward a more stable, well-resourced ecosystem for early career ocean professionals that can endure through 2030 and beyond.



Communication Channels

caribbean@ecopdecade.org

dayne@discover70.org

https://discover70.org/

https://www.ecopdecade.org/caribbean/

ECOP Central America

Introduction

The Central American node was formed in September 2022 as a result of the programme's presence at the ICES/PICES Early Career Scientist Conference in Newfoundland, Canada (July 2022).

Central America is a small region bridging North and South America, yet its ocean territory is immense, with Exclusive Economic Zones nearly five times larger than its landmass. The region hosts extraordinary marine life, diverse ecosystems, and globally significant trade routes such as the Panama Canal. Coral reefs, mangroves, and migratory species thrive within these waters, making them true biodiversity hotspots. Yet, ocean sciences remain limited in much of the region, with few university programs and career pathways, particularly in countries such as Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador. As an underrepresented region, Central America has also had limited visibility in the international ocean science landscape. Strengthening science-informed decision-making is therefore pivotal for ensuring sustainable and just development, and involving and empowering a new generation of ocean professionals is central to this effort.

From a dream of positioning Central America as a reference region for interdisciplinary ocean research, management, and conservation by creating and expanding opportunities for training and skill development for the emerging generation of ocean professionals, the Central American node aims to build a regional community of Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs) that promotes collaboration, knowledge exchange, and capacity development, while increasing the visibility and impact of ECOP contributions to the UN Ocean Decade at local, regional, and international levels.

For this purpose, we have developed an action plan:

- **Build** a cross-sectoral regional network of ECOPs and support the development of national and local ECOP networks across Central America.

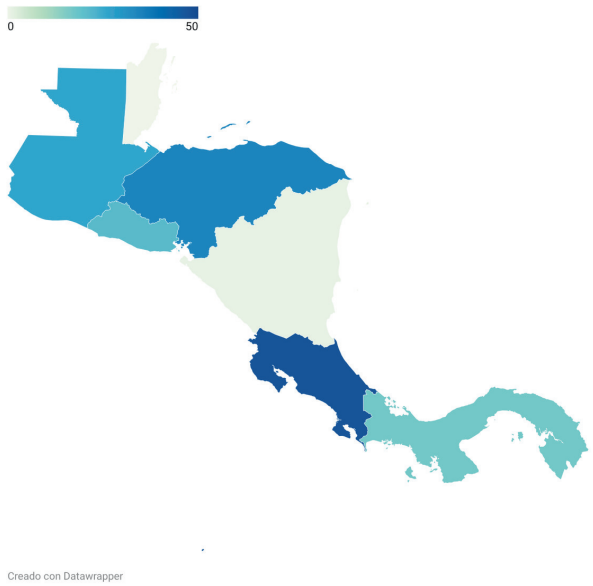
- **Share** relevant news, opportunities (internships, jobs), funding calls, training, and events such as seminars, workshops, symposia, and conferences.

- **Facilitate and co-organize training activities**, including courses and seminars, to strengthen the skills and professional development of Central American ECOPs.

- **Co-organize and participate** in symposia and conferences related to the UN Ocean Decade to promote cross-sectoral knowledge exchange at regional and international levels.

- **Promote networking and ocean literacy activities** at the national level to strengthen collaboration among ECOPs and increase public awareness about the ocean.

The ECOP Central America coordination team is composed of a regional coordination, national coordination units, and two thematic hubs: a capacity development hub and the Network of Marine Migratory Species (REMM, acronym in Spanish). As of April 2026, the node had 147 members registered in the global ECOP register from all six countries: Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama.



Central American ECOPs registered in the ECOP Programme Global Registry as of April 2026 (Graph with Datawrapper).

When the node was formed in 2022 through the worldwide ECOP register, new connections were built and national coordinations were established for the different countries composing the node. All activities and initiatives at the regional and national level are coordinated by the regional and national coordinators on a voluntary basis, through the dedicated effort of Central American ECOPs connecting with partners. Despite operating on a voluntary basis, the node consistently demonstrates commitment, resourcefulness, and collaborative capacity.

Regional coordination

Since the node was launched, it has been involved in a diverse set of regional and national activities, which are described in the following sections. Regional activity has mainly focused on three thematic areas:

- Sharing job opportunities, scholarships, trainings, and conferences
- Participation in international conferences
- Providing capacity building through webinars and courses

Creating a network and sharing of news:
One of the main goals of the node since its launch in January 2023 has been to share ocean-related and relevant information with Central American ECOPs. Since then, different communication channels have been established.

During the first two years, a monthly newsletter was shared with ECOPs in the global register to disseminate relevant news, opportunities (internships, jobs, scholarships), training, events (seminars, workshops, symposia), and other opportunities. The newsletter successfully helped finance the participation of more than 15 Central American ECOPs in international conferences and trainings through the sharing of the "Inclusivity and Diversity Participation Funding" from the Future Earth network.

To expand our reach, and after consulting Central American ECOPs, we decided to start an Instagram page(https://www.instagram.com/ecop_centroamerica/) where we share all opportunities, the node's activities, and relevant information. As a result, our outreach expanded drastically, and we have reached more than 1,200 followers as of April 2026.

Participation in international conferences

- **UN Ocean Decade Conference – Barcelona, Spain, April 2024**

ECOP Central America presented a poster showcasing the node's 2023 activities and survey results conducted in cooperation with other Latin American and Caribbean nodes. The node also co-organized and moderated the satellite event "The Inclusivity We Need for the Ocean We Want" in collaboration with the International Ocean Institute, Ocean Knowledge Action Network, Marine Conservation Action (New England Aquarium), The Ripple Effect, and GOAL, discussing geopolitical diversity within the Ocean Decade, and presented the video "Voices of the Ocean"(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFxWdGrbfOY&t=2s) produced in collaboration with other ECOP nodes and GOAL, with the goal of bringing the perspectives of fishers, fishworkers, and coastal communities to the conference, voices that are often underrepresented.

- **One Ocean Science Conference - Nice, France, June 2025**

ECOP Central America co-moderated the town hall "Capacity Development in the UN Ocean Decade ECOP Programme: Successes, Challenges, and Ways Forward." The discussion focused on solutions to key barriers for early-career professionals from underrepresented regions, including visa denials, funding limitations for those over 30, and language barriers.

- **Third UN Ocean Conference – Nice, France, June 2025**

The node moderated the side event "4 Years of the UN Ocean Decade Programme for Early Career Ocean Professionals," which highlighted the ECOP Programme's global network of over 7,200 members across 166 countries and more than 50 national and regional nodes. ECOP Central America also served as

a panelist in the side event "Ocean Literacy Practices: Knowing, Feeling, Acting for the Ocean," showcasing global best practices, and participated in the virtual side event "Ocean Solutions in Action," which focused on translating science into policy and community-based action.

- **Latinoamérica Azul: Cumbre de jóvenes líderes por el Océano – Costa Rica, June 2024**

ECOPs from the Central American node participated in workshops addressing the most pressing ocean topics in the region.



Central American ECOPs at the OOSC and UNOC3 in Nice, France, June 2025. Credits: Laura Khatib and Jose Fournier.

Capacity building

Since 2023, a webinar series has been developed for Central American ECOPs. The purpose was to provide seminars tailored to the needs and priority topics of the region, and to offer a webinar series in Spanish, addressing a major challenge faced by non-English speaking ECOPs around the world. This initiative helps reduce one of the many inequalities that ECOPs from the Global South face. Since the start, the following webinars have been held (see Table).

On 24 June 2024, ECOP Central America participated in the regional webinar "ECOP in Latin America and Caribbean Region: Goals and Opportunities for the UN Ocean Decade," presenting the results of the regional survey and the activities of the different Latin American nodes.

As a further step, an online course titled "Data Analysis with Python Programming for Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs)" was delivered in partnership with the Ocean Teacher Global Academy (OTGA). This specialized Python programming course responded to the increasing need for technical skills in the analysis of oceanographic data, equipping participants with essential programming abilities to manage, analyze, and visualize diverse ocean datasets. The course introduced fundamentals of Python programming with a focus on data processing, analysis, and visualization in the context of marine research. Tailored specifically for early-career professionals and oceanography students with little to no prior experience in Python, the training provided hands-on experience with real-world datasets. The course received a total of 114 applicants, 40 of whom were from Central America. Of these, 32 enrolled.

Table: Webinar series developed for Central American ECOPs (2023–present).

Name of the webinars	Date	Link
Posicionalidad de ECOPs mujeres en el trabajo de campo marino	23.05.2025	https://youtu.be/SX31ooNloP4?si=qe1Mo1Q0MPBVPVTn
Arrecifes de Centroamérica: su investigación y conservación	20.07.2023	https://youtu.be/B257Y1sGlnQ?si=2qQlDFga30HAMT2M
Patrimonio Cultural Subacuático de Costa Rica	03.11.2023	https://youtu.be/wrqaWhrW9e8?si=cdTmcj5nlvAq8DDa
La minería submarina - situación actual y posibles impactos	22.02.2024	https://youtu.be/yOM048pLHRk?si=qHMN4vFxU0UQGRNT
Situación ambiental marino-costero en El Salvador	04.04.2024	https://youtu.be/mmpWelgDqcg
Estudiando la raya águila en la región a través de fotografías: cómo podemos ayudar?	21.05.2024	https://youtu.be/NmIKcTHtnAI?si=e6uBS5Ser1RBcOft
Sargazo en Centroamérica: retos y Acciones regionales	20.06.2024	https://youtu.be/P8IoyCwgKlQ
Oportunidades de desarrollo para ECOPs latinoamericanos con ASLO	27.06.2025	https://youtu.be/F_nK_LIG81U?si=jkCPoqNATjPzc3qJ
Conociendo a la Asociación Erasmus Mundus: Experiencias y Oportunidades de Beca Completa	11.09.2025	https://youtu.be/F_nK_LIG81U?si=jkCPoqNATjPzc3qJ
Que hacen las Científicas REMM?	23.11.2025	https://youtu.be/hT0mCmfbT8c

Capacity Development Hub

Recognizing the need for capacity building in the region and the effort required, the Capacity Development Hub was launched in 2025 with the coordination. Although recently established, it was already active through the planning of seminars and its most recent development of "Mes Azul." Mes Azul was a free cycle of eight masterclasses with experts from across Latin America, organized by Academia del Océano and ECOP Central America. Its objective was to democratize access to ocean and climate knowledge in the region by offering open, high-quality content with an educational, scientific, and social focus.

The program included:

- Free access: All masterclasses were open to the general public.
- Optional certification: Available for those who wished to obtain a certificate endorsed for 20 academic hours.
- Premium content: Exclusive material available for participants who opted for certification.
- Purpose: To ensure the program remained free, accessible, and sustainable for all of Latin America.
- Social impact: Funds raised were reinvested in education, infrastructure, and community projects of Academia del Océano in San Jacinto, Manabí.

Lecturers from Chile, Ecuador, Panama, the United States of America, Peru, and Mexico delivered masterclasses to Latin American ECOPs on the following topics: blue economy, citizen science and marine conservation, deep sea, bathymetry and mapping of deep sea bottoms, blue schools, the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS and BBNJ), and gender justice.

Next steps

We would like to take a step further and develop an on-site course that promotes ocean observation through monitoring and open access to physical, chemical, and ecological data in the Central American region.

Network of Marine Migratory Species (Red de Especies Marinas Migratorias, REMM)

In cooperation with Migramar, https://www.migramar.org/en/index, REMM was launched through a webinar on 26 May 2025. The hub was created to establish and strengthen collaborative networks among scientists in Latin America dedicated to the study of marine migratory species, opening new connections for collaboration.

On 23 November 2025, the network held its first seminar (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hT0mCmfbT8c), showcasing the work of ECOPs within the network, including María Schoenbeck from Leibniz Centre for Tropical Marine Research (Germany) and Nicole Chinacalle from Migramar (Ecuador).

The network has since launched a story-writing contest in which ECOPs from the network can submit a children's story about a migratory species. In cooperation with the illustrator Fortunaa (https://www.instagram.com/fortuunaa_/), an illustrated book will be created. The book will be published on our networks and included as educational material for the Blue Schools of IOCARIBE.

National coordination

The national coordination looks after the local activities that take place within the node. National coordinators actively participate in regional-level activities and also initiate local actions and activities on a voluntary basis.

Maintaining some national nodes has been challenging due to limited human capacity and the voluntary nature of the work. Given the general lack of funding for ECOPs in Central America, voluntary work represents a significant personal sacrifice. As a result, some national nodes have been able to develop more activities than others. Rather than framing this as a shortfall, we highlight the activities that the node has achieved despite these constraints. Looking ahead, the node aims to strengthen activities in those parts of the region that remain underrepresented, building on the commitment and resourcefulness already demonstrated by Central American ECOPs.

ECOP Guatemala

ECOP Guatemala has been coordinated by María Schoenbeck and Andrea Lira (who had to step down in 2025) since 2023 focusing on ocean literacy and community engagement. Under her leadership and in strategic partnership with Sustainable Ocean Alliance (SOA), the node organized two summer schools for 25 children from the Monterrico Natural Reserve on the Pacific coast, strengthening the bond between local youth and their environment. This commitment to education continued on June 8, 2024, when ECOP Guatemala, SOA, and the Natural History Museum of the University of San Carlos commemorated World Oceans Day with public activities that promoted marine conservation through art, informative stands, and educational talks.

The node has also been instrumental in biodiversity awareness, co-organizing the First Festival of Migratory Birds in October 2024 to highlight the vital connection between these species and marine-coastal ecosystems.

Furthermore, ECOP Guatemala has expanded its impact through international exchange, exemplified by their visit to the Peace Boat (MV Pacific World) in September 2023. During this visit, local ECOPs engaged with the Youth for the SDGs program, sharing insights on activism and participating in joint beach cleanup efforts.

Together, these initiatives underscore ECOP Guatemala's dedication to protecting marine resources.

ECOP Guatemala, in collaboration with SOA, co-presented the film Deep Rising to raise awareness of the potential impact of deep-sea mining on deep-sea ecosystems. During the event, the public had the opportunity to exchange views with experts on the matter.

ECOP Honduras

ECOP Honduras has been coordinated by Paola Diaz and Zara Guifarro since its establishment in 2023. As a first step an online seminar, "ECOP Honduras: Forging Ocean Connections," was held to present the country's coordination, which successfully increased the participation of Honduran ECOPs in the node.

On 14–15 June 2024, ECOP Honduras co-organized the first-ever Coastal Marine Symposium at the UNAH TEC campus in Tela, in collaboration with the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH). The symposium featured a keynote address by Dr. Jorge Cortés, five parallel sessions on topics ranging from marine socio-ecological systems to blue economy, and a screening of the documentary Deep Rising. A total of 54 ECOPs participated, with 32 presentations from 33 organizations; 43 of the attendees were women. Despite limited infrastructure and financial resources, the event generated strong momentum, with 60% of attendees requesting an annual recurrence. The symposium was made possible with the support of UNAH, GOAL, Coral Reef Alliance, and other partners.

After this experience, the node has focused on establishing a strong national coordination to compensate for the limited economic and human capacity that is available. The coordination team has grown in the last year and is planning the second Coastal Marine Symposium in the country in 2026. The goal of the node is to establish this symposium as an event conducted every two years.



First Coastal-Marine Symposium organized by ECOP and UNAH in Honduras in 2024. Collage by Paola Diaz.

ECOP El Salvador

ECOP is being coordinated by Sarai Paiz (coordinated by Laura Figueroa until 2024) El Salvador co-organized the First Coastal Marine Symposium of El Salvador, held from 23 to 25 September 2024 at the Universidad de El Salvador (UES), in collaboration with the School of Biology of the Faculty of Natural Sciences and

Mathematics. The event featured 16 presentations and 4 workshops delivered by national and international speakers, with over 200 participants from biology and related programs. ECOP El Salvador contributed by screening the documentary Deep Rising to raise awareness about the impacts of deep-sea mining. The symposium was made possible through the support of the Institute of Marine and Limnological Sciences (ICMARES), Sustainable Ocean Alliance El Salvador, and other local organizations. This event, coordinated on a voluntary basis, demonstrates the commitment of Salvadoran ECOPs to advancing marine science and ocean literacy in the country.

ECOP Costa Rica

The node has undergone changes in its coordination team. Under the coordination of Diego Fallas and Felipe Alfaro, ECOP Costa Rica participated in various activities. On 15 June 2024, a composting workshop was held at the Centro de Gestión y Educación Ambiental, demonstrating the importance of composting in preventing waste from reaching the ocean. Screenings of the documentary Deep Rising were also organized to raise awareness about the risks of deep-sea mining, particularly for the Central American region.

In 2025, the coordination transitioned to Mariana Viales and Anna Leal, whose efforts are focused on building a strong network of ECOPs in Costa Rica. Additionally, Mariana Viales participated as a speaker at the Conferencia de Economía Azul y Empleados Azules in Santa Marta, Colombia (28–29 October 2025), sharing her experience on how scientific research, community cooperation, and innovation in marine resource management can contribute to the development of a sustainable and resilient blue economy in Latin America.

ECOP Panama

Although the Panama node was established in 2023, it faced difficulties in mobilizing human capacity due to the voluntary basis of participation. Nevertheless, the node successfully regained its activity under the coordination of Stephanie Arango, together with a team composed of Ximena Boza, Janeth Jaén, and Isis Ramos. They planned a networking activity for ECOPs in Panama, combining networking with short presentations by prominent ocean scientists in the country. The event saw strong attendance, with more than 50 ECOPs participating (https://www.instagram.com/p/DVg9TIMEWNw/?img_index=1).

A cooperation is now being explored with the International Platform for Ocean Sustainability (IPOS), which would allow ECOPs in Panama to actively participate in the activities that the platform is currently conducting in the country.

Plans ahead

Looking ahead, the Central American node has different priorities to consolidate its impact, ensure long-term sustainability, and position the region as a leader in ocean science and capacity development.

1. Financial sustainability and funding access

The node will establish a dedicated bank account to formally apply for competitive grants, institutional donations, and crowdfunding initiatives. This financial mechanism will allow the node to secure resources for national and regional activities, including the organization of symposia, training courses, and outreach events. Critically, it will also enable the node to provide direct financial support for Central American ECOPs to attend international conferences, workshops, and exchange programmes, addressing one of the most persistent barriers faced by early-career professionals from the region.

2. In-person training course on oceanographic data monitoring and sharing

In collaboration with the OceanTeacher Global Academy (OTGA), the node will develop and deliver an in-person course in El Salvador focused on long-term monitoring of oceanographic and ecological data, as well as data sharing based on FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable). Central America remains a region with limited, fragmented, and often inaccessible ocean data. This course will train ECOPs in standardised methodologies for data collection, quality control, and open-access publication, while fostering cross-border collaboration among the six Central American countries. By building a regional community of practice around data stewardship, the node aims to enrich the collective knowledge base, support evidence-based decision-making, and position Central American data within global ocean observing systems.

3. Legacy beyond the Ocean Decade

The node is committed to securing a lasting institutional framework that will ensure its continuity well beyond the UN Ocean Decade (2021–2030). Ultimately, the goal is to transform the node from a time-bound programme initiative into a permanent, self-sustaining network that empowers generations of Central American ocean professionals for decades to come.

Communication Channels

https://www.instagram.com/ecop_centroamerica/

central_america@ecopdecade.org

https://www.ecopdecade.org/central-america/

ECOP Chile

Introduction

ECOP Chile began in March 2025 by reaching out to people in the database, as well as contacting individuals who were important for building a profile of young and motivated people engaged with the ocean. We consider 14 March 2025 as the official start date, as this was when we created the WhatsApp group and the process of preparing and sharing ideas began.

ECOP Chile aims to create a dynamic space for learning, growth, and collaboration, enabling Early Career Ocean Professionals to build skills aligned with the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. Its mission is to strengthen their participation in decision-making, foster connections with professional networks, and support their contributions to ocean conservation and management at local and regional levels.

The network focuses on developing an interdisciplinary community by facilitating knowledge exchange and co-creation, while promoting scientific communication, citizen engagement, and stronger links between research, advocacy, and public policy.

ECOP Chile aspires to become a national reference for ocean professionals—building a diverse, collaborative, and active community that drives impactful projects, inspires leadership, and promotes sustainable ocean governance. Its long-term vision is to influence the relationship between society and the ocean, contributing to human well-being and the health of marine ecosystems through integrated knowledge and collective action.

ECOP Chile Team

Co-Coordinators and Executive Committee:

- Valentina Muñoz Kortmann: Social psychologist specialized in public policy and environmental management, currently studying a MSc in Marine Conservation in University of Plymouth, UK.
- Constanza Cantarero Solís: Environmental Engineer and Oceanographer working from Spain, specialized in Oceanic Culture and Marine Conservation).

Communications and outreach:

- Constanza Vergara: Marine Biologist, specialised in Marine Conservation, Ocean Literacy, and Sustainability.

Oceanic Culture:

- Moisés Gallo: Marine biologist, specialized in scientific communication, marine environmental education and ocean literacy.

Training, Policy and Analysis:

- Lucía Villar-Muñoz: PhD in Marine Geosciences, solid experience in mineral and energy resources. Winner of the Women in Sciences Award 2024, Chile.

Official Partners:

- CONA: National Oceanographic Committee – Chile
- University of Concepción
- United Nations Chile – Youth Reference Group of the United Nations Chile

We have established partnerships for special occasions such as events and conferences; however, these are temporary collaborations, and our plan is to continue building fully formal partnerships over time.

Impact

Main achievements

Our first public event at which we were recognized took place at the Chilean National Congress during the celebration of World Oceans Day. At this event, we received recognition as a group that promotes ocean awareness and inspiration. We were also featured by the Senate of Chile's official channel, where we presented our purpose, principles, scope (as part of the global ECOP Programme network), and our projected future impact based on our mission and vision.

Other highlights to date include the growing outreach of our node through various events, where members have been invited to showcase their work as individuals and as part of an emerging network of empowered young professionals. In international contexts, this has also allowed us to highlight our role as a Global South initiative gaining momentum.



On World Oceans Day 2026, ECOP Chile received an award from the National Congress of Chile for its ocean education work in the country. Credits: Moisés Gallo.



On-site panel in Barcelona - Blue future: The Voice of the Youth of the Sea. ECOP Chile represented by Constanza Cantarero, node co-coordinator. Credits: Gerard Franquesa.

Additionally, our official international launch took place in August 2025 through a webinar hosted on the global ECOP Programme platform. This event featured distinguished speakers from both the Chilean and international ocean communities. The roundtable discussion focused on the human side of ocean-related work, including the personal experiences that inspired their

careers (even from childhood), their professional journeys, the current state of their fields, and the key challenges facing young Chilean professionals. This was an enriching experience for both the coordination team and our members.



ECOP 30 Virtual Panel - Engaging People with the Sea: Creative and Innovative Pathways to Marine Citizenship (organised by an alliance of UK institutions). ECOP Chile represented by Valentina Munoz Kortmann, node co-coordinator.

Finally, our regional collaboration with other South American nodes has been highly motivating and valuable. We recognize that we share common challenges, and that collective empowerment is essential to strengthening our representation at the global level.

In this context, in April 2026 we hosted our first regional public event: a webinar addressing the challenges of ocean governance in the region. The event featured three panelists representing Colombia, Ecuador, and Chile, each bringing perspectives on the specific challenges faced in their countries.

Highlighted activities

This first year has marked the beginning of a truly empowering network for its members. The initial phase has been a process filled with learning, inspiration, and meaningful connections. It has been especially empowering for the founding and coordination team leading ECOP Chile during this first year.

So far, we have already begun to see a positive impact on the ECOP community in Chile. The network is fostering connections, increasing visibility for young professionals, and creating opportunities for engagement both nationally and internationally. Through a bottom-up approach, members are encouraged to share their ideas and actively contribute to initiatives, ensuring that all voices are heard and valued.

Looking ahead, this network will continue contributing to education and visibility through a variety of initiatives. Our goal is to empower members by providing opportunities to connect with organizations, participate in activities, and access professional pathways both within Chile and globally.

Plans ahead

Our plans for the remainder of the Ocean Decade and beyond focus on developing initiatives that address all ten challenges of the Decade. This will be achieved through events, activities, and networking opportunities, both in-person and online.

At this stage, we have begun with broad, foundational initiatives, including strengthening our community through meaningful human connections, sharing opportunities related to careers and visibility, and promoting key areas such as ocean culture, training and capacity development, policy analysis, and communication and outreach.

As the network continues to grow, our aim is to engage an increasingly motivated and diverse group of members whose initiatives will collectively address the full scope of the Ocean Decade challenges. In doing so, we seek to empower young professionals to develop across multiple sectors—both public and private—and to become future leaders and changemakers for the Chilean and global ocean.

In parallel, we are expanding our collaborations with organizations to build strong and lasting partnerships.

As we grow, we expect these partnerships to provide meaningful opportunities for ECOP Chile members, including participation in conferences, educational activities, internships, and employment opportunities. These collaborations are intended to be mutually beneficial, fostering trust and long-term engagement between organizations and our members.

Communication Channels

https://www.instagram.com/ecop_chile/

https://www.linkedin.com/company/ecopchile/

https://www.ecopdecade.org/chile/

chile@ecopdecade.org

ECOP Colombia

Introduction

ECOP Colombia came about as a result of Evgeniia Kostianaia, ECOP Programme Global Coordinator, hosting Joshua Baghdady and Juliana Di Filippo in the same flat for the 2024 Ocean Decade conference in Barcelona in early April 2024. Joshua and Juliana met as a result of this shared space and began discussing how the forward momentum created by the global ECOP Programme might be brought to Juliana's home country of Colombia. After the conference, Joshua introduced Juliana to Jhon Bermúdez, a mechatronics engineer from Bogotá with a passion for sharing his love of engineering and the ocean with kids in Colombia, and together Joshua, Juliana, and Jhon decided to kickstart ECOP Colombia in summer 2024. We hosted our in-country kickoff call at the end of November 2024 and officially joined the ranks of the ECOP Programme's national nodes in conjunction with the Third United Nations Ocean Conference in June 2025.

Our mission is to strengthen the capacities and enhance the visibility and active participation of ECOPs in Colombia through collaborative networks and working groups, educational outreach, scientific communications, and technical projects, and federate disparate and disjointed marine stewardship efforts under a national construct to drive sustainable solutions for the ocean and the communities that depend on it.

Our vision is to become a national and regional model of young professionals committed to inclusive ocean governance that promotes social justice, advances equity, fosters active participation from local communities, and contributes to the fulfillment of the Ocean Decade's objectives.

Traditional barriers to public engagement in sustainable ocean practices often stem from a lack of awareness, education, and most important inclusion of the general society. In Colombia, this can be linked to a scarcity of economic as well as educational resources that are available in Spanish. Additionally, only around 4% of Colombians are proficient in English, which inhibits access to the majority of the world's published ocean scientific literature and dialogue. These factors preclude access to educational and employment opportunities and international sustainability initiatives such as the UN Ocean Decade. For many, such lack of exposure gives rise to an inability to internalize the impact of individual actions on the health of marine ecosystems, for better or for worse. This leads to a disengaged citizenry unable to recognize their belonging and place in a sustainable ocean future. We founded ECOP Colombia as a way to improve Colombians' relationship with the

ocean by accelerating the sustainable use of Colombia's coastal, riverine, and maritime resources through grassroots scientific discovery, technology innovation, training, mentoring, ocean literacy initiatives, and public outreach.

Coordinators and main partners

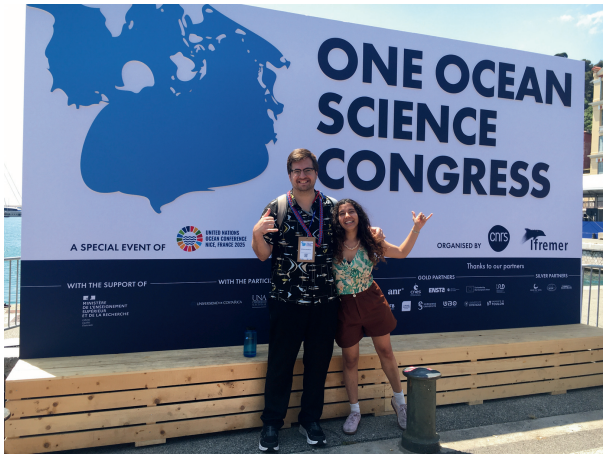
ECOP Colombia began in 2024 with three joint coordinators: Joshua Baghdady, Juliana Di Filippo, and Jhon Bermúdez. In fall 2025 Camilo Ramirez joined the coordination team and Joshua and Jhon shifted to an advisory role, together with Angélica Borja. Beginning in winter 2026 we organized three task teams within the node: capacity development, ocean literacy, and communications. These teams are being led by Laura Suaza, Andrea Osorio Baquero, and Karen Urbano, respectively.

We collaborate closely with the Colombian Ocean Commission (CCO), the Colombian National Technical Committee for the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, the Decade Coordination Office for Ocean Data Sharing, Fundación PEZQUIZA (an NGO), Fundación Coriacea (an NGO), RISE UP for the Ocean, R.V.D. Steam, and IEEE-OES Colombia. We also work closely with fellow ECOP South America nodes ECOP Ecuador and ECOP Chile.

Impact

Main achievements

Over the past year, ECOP Colombia has strengthened the visibility and engagement of Early Career Ocean Professionals through active participation in key national and international convenings. These included the One Ocean Science Congress 2025, the Third United Nations Ocean Conference, OCEANS 2025 in both Brest, France and Chicago, USA, the First Caribbean Blue Forum, and the 2025 Blue Economy and Blue Jobs Conference.



Joshua Baghdady and Michelle Guevara of ECOP Colombia at the One Ocean Science Congress in Nice, France, 6 June 2025. Credits: Laura Khatib.



ECOP Colombia's coordinating team and members, along with institutional partners. INVEMAR, Santa Marta, Colombia, October 2025. Credits: ECOP Colombia.

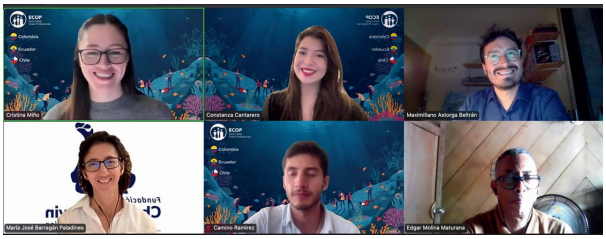
At the Blue Economy and Blue Jobs Conference, we contributed by participating in three panels and co-organizing a joint workshop with ECOP Ecuador focused on blue skills.



The ECOP Colombia coordinating team (Juliana Di Filippo, Andrea Osorio, Karen Urbano, Laura Suaza, Camilo Ramírez) leading the ECOP Labs: Blue Skills, Blue Economy event, Santa Marta, Colombia. October 2025. Credits: ECOP Colombia.

At the national level, we also participated in an energy transition event and engaged in governance processes, including the 11th National Technical Committee of the Ocean Decade. Additionally, we participated in discussions on offshore wind, including a workshop co-organised with two NGOs: SEI Colombia and Fundación Batis.

Regionally, we strengthened collaboration with ECOP Chile and ECOP Ecuador through a trilateral webinar series on ocean governance in the Southeast Pacific region and the launch of a regional survey to assess the needs and challenges of ECOPs throughout South America. We are also looking forward to co-hosting an ocean governance town hall with ECOP Chile and ECOP Ecuador at the 2026 World Conference on Marine Biodiversity in Belgium in late 2026.



Camilo Ramirez (ECOP Colombia), Cristina Miño (ECOP Ecuador), and Constanza Cantarero (ECOP Chile) with the guest speakers during the first ocean governance webinar held between the three countries, 15 April 2026. Credits: Juliana Di Filippo.

Overall, one of the most important reflections from this period is how crucial it is to create and expand spaces where ECOPs can be meaningfully heard and actively involved in decision-making processes. This recognition continues to guide our efforts to strengthen inclusive participation across all levels of ocean stewardship.

Ongoing activities

Current activities include:

- A regional survey (Colombia, Chile, Ecuador) to inform inclusive strategies for ECOPs
- A webinar series on ocean governance in the Southeast Pacific
- A new webinar series on the Ocean Decade in Colombia, co-organized with the Colombian Ocean Commission and the Decade Coordination Office for Ocean Data Sharing. We intend for this series to become an official Ocean Decade activity.
- Supporting initiatives led by RISE UP for the Ocean, Fisheries

Transparency Initiative (FiTI), and other international initiatives

- Greater presence on social media and amplifying the voices of Colombian ECOPs

- Developing and supporting initiatives that involve ocean literacy and capacity development

Reflections

ECOP Colombia is increasingly recognized as a platform connecting early career professionals to national, regional, and global ocean governance processes. Our activities have contributed to greater visibility, collaboration, and dialogue, while initiatives such as the survey and webinars are helping to better represent ECOP perspectives and strengthen community engagement.

Plans ahead

An important priority moving forward is to develop a strategy to secure financial support that enables ECOP participation in courses, conferences, and capacity-building activities, as well as the organization of such initiatives. This may involve exploring funding opportunities from government institutions as well as other potential sources. While this is still at an early stage, we recognize it as a key step to ensure more inclusive and sustained engagement of ECOPs in Colombia. Looking ahead to 2030, ECOP Colombia aims to strengthen collaboration with key actors at national, regional, and international levels to support knowledge-based decision-making for ocean and coastal sustainability. We will continue fostering regional partnerships, engaging in governance processes such as FiTI, and promoting capacity building aligned with the Ocean Decade. Key upcoming events in which we intend to participate include the 2026 National Seminar on Marine Sciences and Technologies, the 2026 World Conference on Marine Biodiversity, and the Ocean Decade Conference in Rio de Janeiro in 2027.

Call for Action

As we grow our stakeholder network within Colombia, we are always looking for motivated, like-minded ECOPs to join our node and support the various initiatives that are underway. Additionally, as mentioned above, we are seeking financial and in-kind support to further our work in additional communities and expand our impact nationwide. If you would like to contribute in any of these ways, please reach out to us via our communication channels listed below!

Communication Channels

https://co.linkedin.com/in/ecop-colombia-164bb1368

https://www.ecopdecade.org/colombia

colombia@ecopdecade.org

https://www.instagram.com/ecopcolombia/

ECOP Ecuador

Introduction

The Ecuador node of the ECOP Programme began to take shape in June 2024, when the coordinator first reached out to the ECOP Programme Global Coordinator and started identifying ECOPs across the country who were interested in shaping a national chapter. After several preparatory conversations, we held our first formal meeting in August 2024, which we consider the official starting point of ECOP Ecuador. This was followed by an open call for expressions of interest, through which volunteers stepped forward to form the national coordination team and a broader advisory body. Since then, the node has grown steadily and now brings together a multidisciplinary community of early career professionals from continental Ecuador and the Galápagos Islands.

The mission of ECOP Ecuador is to strengthen the capacities of early career ocean professionals in Ecuador, promoting the conservation and sustainable use of the country's marine and coastal ecosystems. We pursue this through education, community action, citizen participation, scientific research and outreach, alongside funding opportunities, knowledge exchange and cooperation. The node also contributes to climate change mitigation and biodiversity protection by building meaningful networks across sectors and generations. Our priority areas reflect the most pressing needs we have identified: strengthening national and regional cooperation, communicating opportunities for collaboration and employment, and advancing ocean literacy and public awareness.

The challenges faced by ECOPs in Ecuador are shaped by both global structural barriers and local realities. Specialised postgraduate training in marine and ocean sciences remains scarce within the country, which pushes many young professionals to pursue studies abroad and contributes to a persistent brain drain that weakens local institutional capacity. Research infrastructure is fragmented, ocean science funding is limited, and access to advanced scientific equipment and marine technology is constrained by import costs and currency fluctuations common across Latin America. The geographic divide between continental Ecuador and the Galápagos Islands creates additional logistical and coordination hurdles. Coastal communities, including Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian populations whose livelihoods depend directly on the ocean, remain underrepresented in formal ocean science processes. Finally, much of the world's ocean science literature and dialogue takes place in English, which limits access for many Spanish-speaking ECOPs and weakens the science–policy interface at the national level.

These are precisely the gaps that our node was created to help close.



Official launch of the ECOP Ecuador node. Credits: ECOP Ecuador.

Coordinators and main partners

ECOP Ecuador is led by a coordination team of four. Cristina Mino serves as overall coordinator, supported by co-coordinators Janice Márquez de la Plata, Kevin Mindiola, and Carlos Robalino Mejía. The team combines expertise in ocean observation, governance, marine biology, ecology, biodiversity, and pelagic species research, with members based both in Ecuador and abroad.

In addition to the coordination team, an advisory body of eight professionals from diverse fields, including marine science, aquaculture, ocean governance, conservation, education, and communications, accompanied the early development of the node. Their guidance was particularly valuable in shaping our mission and vision and in designing the regional webinar series on ocean governance in the Southeast Pacific. We are sincerely grateful for their continued support.

ECOP Ecuador is currently formalising partnerships with national NGOs and governmental institutions. Key collaborations include the Sustainable Ocean Alliance (SOA) Ecuador chapter, which supports youth-led ocean advocacy and outreach, and the National Biodiversity Institute of Ecuador (INABIO), which contributes scientific and policy expertise on biodiversity and ecosystem management. We also maintain close regional collaboration with ECOP Colombia and ECOP Chile.

In parallel, a funding proposal with the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) in Belgium is under review. If approved, it would support capacity-building activities for Ecuadorian ECOPs, including a knowledge-exchange workshop in Guayaquil with ESPOL, a mentoring pilot, and the development of open-access training materials through the VUB MSc in Marine and Lacustrine Science and Management alumni network.

Impact

Main achievements

Although ECOP Ecuador is still a young node, its first period of activity has already generated

concrete outputs and strong engagement at national and regional levels. One key achievement has been the launch of a trilateral webinar series on ocean governance in the Southeast Pacific, co-organised with ECOP Colombia and ECOP Chile. The series brought together speakers and audiences from the three countries to discuss regional ocean governance challenges and strengthen ECOP participation in policy dialogue. It has become a recurring platform for exchange among Andean Pacific countries and a model for South–South collaboration among ECOP nodes.

Second, we co-organised a blue skills workshop with ECOP Colombia during the 2025 Blue Economy and Blue Jobs Conference. The session explored the competencies needed in the emerging blue economy and created a space for ECOPs across the region to exchange experiences and identify shared training needs.

Third, together with ECOP Colombia and ECOP Chile, we launched a regional survey of Early Career Ocean Professionals to identify key needs, barriers, and aspirations across the Southeast Pacific. The results will help guide future training and mentoring activities.

Beyond these initiatives, ECOP Ecuador has been represented in national and international events, including engagement with the UN Ocean Decade community. We have also expanded our public outreach through LinkedIn (439 followers) and Instagram (218 followers), where we share opportunities and highlight Ecuadorian ECOP initiatives.



Extended call for ECOPs needs survey.

Ongoing activities

Current workstreams include the regional ECOP survey (Ecuador, Colombia, Chile), the webinar series on ocean governance in the Southeast Pacific, the development of thematic areas within the node (capacity development, ocean literacy, and communications), and efforts to formalise partnerships with NGOs, universities, and government institutions. We are also preparing the implementation phase of the VUB-supported capacity-building project, pending funding approval.

Reflections

Although still in an early stage, ECOP Ecuador is becoming a reference point for early career ocean professionals in the country. Interest has grown among both ECOPs and established institutions seeking collaboration and support for youth engagement. The strong collaboration between the coordination team, advisory members, and regional partners has reinforced the importance of creating spaces where ECOPs can contribute meaningfully to ocean decision-making in Ecuador.

Plans ahead

Towards 2030, ECOP Ecuador aims to strengthen its governance, expand thematic working areas, deepen collaboration with ECOP Colombia and ECOP Chile, and formalise partnerships with NGOs, universities, research centres, and government institutions. Priorities also include implementing the VUB-supported capacity-building project, exploring additional funding opportunities, and participating actively in milestones of the UN Ocean Decade, including the 2027 Ocean Decade Conference in Rio de Janeiro.

Call for Action

ECOP Ecuador welcomes collaboration with:

- Ecuadorian ECOPs interested in joining thematic working areas.
- Mentors and established ocean professionals willing to support the next generation of ocean leaders.
- Universities, NGOs, research institutes, government bodies, and private-sector actors interested in partnerships on training, research, and outreach.
- Funding partners and sponsors to support workshops, training, webinars, outreach activities, and equitable participation from coastal and remote regions, including the Galápagos Islands.

Communication Channels

https://www.linkedin.com/company/ecop-ecuador/

https://www.ecopdecade.org/ecuador/

ecuador@ecopdecade.org

https://www.instagram.com/ecop_ecuador/?hl=da

ECOP USA

Introduction

The United States Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOP USA) Node was established in 2023 to address the critical needs identified by the ECOPs within the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (Ocean Decade). These needs include improved coordination of opportunities across networking, funding, training, and inclusive engagement, gaps that, if unaddressed, risk leaving the next generation of ocean professionals without the support structures necessary to drive lasting impact.

The mission of the ECOP USA Node is to draw in a diverse body of early career professionals, listen to and identify their needs, and empower them to become future leaders through training and knowledge sharing. This mission is pursued through three core objectives:

(1) Facilitating entry and engagement with the Ocean Decade;

(2) Enhancing collaboration and partnerships across institutions and disciplines; and

(3) Fostering a skilled, inclusive ocean sustainability workforce.

The Node is led by a Steering Committee and supported by a growing network of alumni who helped shape its direction since its founding. Current 2026 Steering Committee members include Alessandra Burgos, Alicia Cheripka, Alex Webster, Emily Johnson, Gina Maldonado, Lexi Anderson, Hannah Lachance, Maria Grima, Maria Tooker, Madyson Miller, Taryn Kohl, and Rachel Roday.

The Node also gratefully acknowledges its Steering Committee Alumni, whose foundational contributions made the Node what it is today: Angee Doerr, Anna Rothstein, Annie Brett, Alyson Fleming, Caisey Myers, Celina Harris, Claudia Baron-Aguilar, Emily Nocito, Erin Satterthwaite, Gabby Kitch, Jacob Eurich, Joseph Naughton, Julia (Jules) Luthringer, Kailani Acosta, Kaitlen Lang, Liliana Bastian, Matthew Savoca, Maya Whalen-Kipp, Victoria Moreno, and Zoraida Pérez Delgado.

Impact

- **Building a Digital Community**

The Node has significantly expanded its digital presence in recent years. A dedicated LinkedIn Showcase Page was launched to increase visibility among ocean science institutions and professionals, while the Node's Slack community has grown to over 300 members, creating a dynamic space for peer-to-peer connection and resource sharing. A high-value newsletter has reached over 750 readers, ensuring consistent and meaningful communication with the broader ECOP Community.

- **Professional Programming and Events**

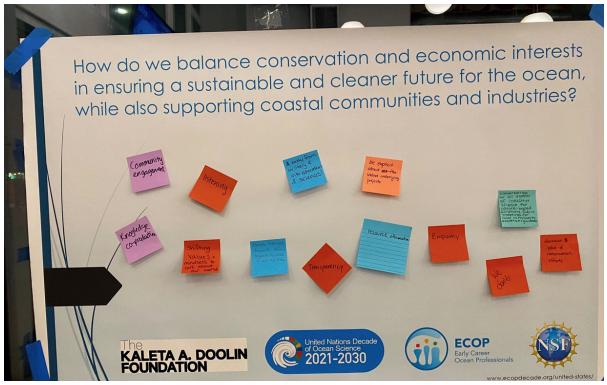
The Node has developed a robust calendar of networking events tailored to the diverse needs of ECOPs. Highlights include:

1. A Virtual Networking Summit co-organized with the Gulf of Maine Research Institute bridged regional gaps and connected ECOPs across the country.

2. An ECOP USA Meet-Up at the Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation (CERF) Conference (Portland, OR, 2023), hosted alongside the Kaleta A. Doolin Foundation, brought approximately 20 ECOPs together for facilitated discussion around ocean challenges and solutions.

3. A panel presentation at the Ecological Society of America (ESA) in 2023 highlighted how the ECOP USA Node maintains connections across ocean disciplines nationally and globally.

4. A Climate Empowerment Panel, held in person during Capitol Hill Ocean Week 2025 in partnership with the Sustainable Ocean Alliance, addressed the mental health dimensions of ocean advocacy, an often-overlooked but essential topic.



Facilitated brainstorming session at the ECOP Meet-Up, CERF Conference 2023.
Credits: Alessandra Burgos.

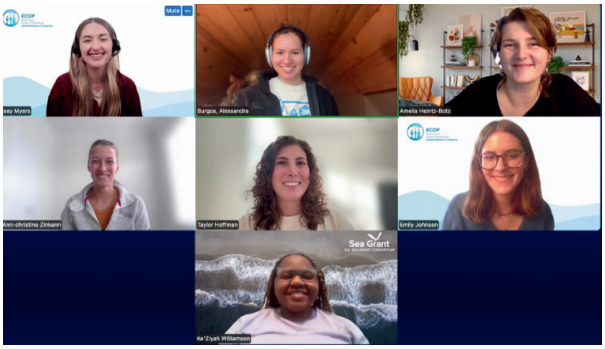


Erin Satterthwaite presenting at ESA 2023.
Credits: Alessandra Burgos.



2023 Chair, Hannah Lachance, pictured with leaders of several other country and regional ECOP nodes during the PICES Annual Meeting 2023.
Credits: Hannah Lachance.


Climate Empowerment Panel presenters during Capitol Hill Ocean Week 2025 (left to right): Dr. Mickey Rogers, Taylor Ganis, Tom Di Liberto, Dr. Marina Kerlow, Reagan Gibson, Madyson Miller, Maria Grima, Mark Haver. Credits: Madyson Miller.



2025 Mid-Atlantic Career Pathways Webinar Series presenters (left to right): Caisey Myers, Ann-Christine Zinkann, Alessandra Burgos, Taylor Hoffman, Ke'Ziyah Williamson, Amelia Heintz-Botz, and Emily Johnson. Credits: Alessandra Burgos.



2025 Co-Chairs Caisey Myers and Emily Johnson presenting at AGU 2025. Credits: Caisey Myers.

5. A Career Pathways Webinar Series in 2025 was successfully launched with three inaugural sessions, offering ECOPs exposure to diverse professional trajectories and long-term career resources.

6. Presentations at AGU in 2025 and Ocean Sciences Meeting (OSM) in 2026 elevated the visibility of the ECOP Programme within the international scientific community.

- **Community Reach and Inclusion**

From the outset, the Node has prioritized inclusive engagement and the elevation of underrepresented voices within ocean science. This commitment is reflected both in the diversity of its programming and in its ongoing efforts to reach ECOPs across geographies, from the coasts to underserved inland communities.

Plans ahead

Looking toward 2030 and beyond, the ECOP Node has an ambitious and community-driven agenda.

On the communications front, the Node is developing an Instagram presence to complement its existing newsletter, LinkedIn, and Slack channels. Internally, the focus is on more consistent and transparent engagement within the Slack network and on elevating member success stories to inspire the wider community.

For events, the Career Pathways Webinar Series will expand geographically, with planned sessions targeting the West Coast (Hawaii, California, Oregon, Washington, and Alaska) and the Gulf Coast. The Node also hopes to partner once again with the Sustainable Ocean Alliance DMV for Capitol Hill Ocean Week 2026, potentially including Hill Days, an advocacy workshop, and a co-hosted networking event.

In terms of community engagement, the Node is working to develop a creative membership recruitment and retention strategy, reconnect with the Youth Leadership Council to create a clear pathway from youth engagement to

ECOP involvement, and better support members transitioning into mid-career roles. Expanding in-person engagement outside of the East Coast is a key priority. The Node is also exploring the launch of a unique community program, such as an ocean-themed book club, peer-review group, or skills workshop series.

Internationally, the ECOP USA Node is deepening ties with the Central American Regional Node, exploring connections with the Senegal ECOP Node, and working to reestablish its relationship with the Canadian & Caribbean ECOP Programme Nodes, opening doors for cross-country collaboration and global opportunities for members.

ECOP USA is committed to expanding advocacy opportunities. This includes developing template letters to elected officials, identifying relevant trainings and policy engagement pathways, and exploring creative funding and partnership models to sustain the Node's work.

Call for Action

The ECOP USA Node welcomes partnerships with organizations that share a commitment to ocean sustainability and early career development. We invite institutions, funders, and fellow nodes to reach out and explore opportunities for collaboration.



Communication Channels

https://www.linkedin.com/company/ecop-usa

https://www.ecopdecade.org/united-states/

usa@ecopdecade.org

EUROPE

- Regional overview
- ECOP Belgium
- ECOP DACH (Deutschland (Germany), Austria, and CH (Confoederatio Helvetica, Switzerland))
- ECOP France
- ECOP Greece
- ECOP Italy
- ECOP Netherlands
- ECOP Norway
- ECOP Portugal
- ECOP Spain



Credits: Nicolas Job/Ocean Image Bank

Regional Overview

Introduction

ECOP Europe was established in April 2025 with the formation of its Coordinator Team and associated Steering Committee.

The mission of ECOP Europe is to build and sustain a vibrant, multidisciplinary community of ECOPs across Europe. ECOP Europe is committed to fostering personal and professional growth, strengthening cross-sectoral collaboration between academia, policy, industry, and society, and advancing the Ocean Decade's vision of "the science we need for the ocean we want."

ECOP Europe aims to serve as the central hub for ECOP engagement in Europe by maintaining an active inventory of ECOPs, networks, initiatives, supportive stakeholders, and events, cultivating a true network of networks.

By identifying the needs, priorities, and challenges faced by European ECOPs, ECOP Europe works to create meaningful opportunities for capacity development, representation, and empowerment.

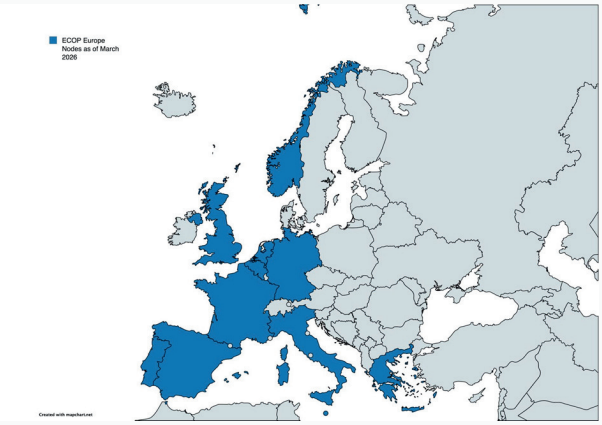
Coordinators and main partners

ECOP Europe's Coordination Team is:

- Conor Savage, ECOP Europe Coordinator
- Tristan da Silva e Ornelas, ECOP Europe Deputy Coordinator
- Mariana de Botton Falcón, ECOP Europe Deputy Coordinator
- Houda Beghoura, ECOP Europe Deputy Coordinator
- Alessandro Gibertini, ECOP Europe Deputy Coordinator

Our main partners are the European ECOP Nodes that represent the Members of ECOP Europe and we work to support.

Impact



On the map above, you can see the ECOP National Nodes that currently exist across Europe.

Each ECOP Node represents a growing community of Early Career Ocean Professionals working together to advance the goals of the UN Ocean Decade.

Ongoing activities

We have a number of activities:

- Maintain an up-to-date inventory of ECOPs, networks, initiatives, and supportive stakeholders across Europe.

- Identify and address the needs, priorities, and challenges of European ECOPs.

- Organise capacity-development opportunities that strengthen skills, leadership, and collaboration.

- Support the establishment and growth of National Nodes across Europe.

- Ensure fair, inclusive, and balanced representation of ECOPs from all European regions.

- Build strong relationships with strategic partners across sectors.

- Seek new sources of support and funding to sustain and expand European ECOP Nodes´ work.

This year marked a major milestone for ECOP Europe: ECOP Europe was selected to join the European Ocean Board, a high-level expert group advising on the implementation of the European Ocean Pact. This ensures that ECOP voices are represented in pan-European discussions shaping the future of ocean governance.



The cohort of the European Ocean Board at the first meeting in Brussels.
Credits: European Ocean Board.

Plans ahead

ECOP Europe will continue to work towards our vision of nurturing an inclusive, diverse, and connected community of European ECOPs who are equipped with the networks, skills, and opportunities needed to drive impactful ocean action during and beyond the UN Ocean Decade. We envision a Europe where ECOPs can thrive, collaborate across borders and sectors, and contribute to shaping a sustainable future for our ocean. This will be primarily achieved through the establishment of new European ECOP Nodes, ensuring fair representation across all European regions, and strong partnerships with strategic actors, striving to ensure that every ECOP has a voice and a pathway to meaningful engagement.

Call for Action

If you would like to start an ECOP National Node in your country, please reach out to ECOP Europe and you will be supported through the process.

Communication Channels

https://www.linkedin.com/company/ecop-europe/

europe@ecopdecade.org

https://www.instagram.com/ecopeurope/

@ecopeurope

ECOP Belgium

Introduction

ECOP Belgium kicked off during the World Ocean Day (June 7) in 2024 with 3 coordinators volunteers and seven key supportive partners: the National Decade Committee for Belgium, JPI Oceans, Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ), Horizon Educatief, Marine Biology research group at Ghent University, IMBRSea Erasmus master programme and the Master of Marine and Lacustrine Science and Management (VUB, UGent, UAntwerp). The ECOP Belgium node aims to be a vibrant community dedicated to facilitating, spreading and enabling access to opportunities for ECOPs based in Belgium who are looking to start a job after their master or PhD. In Belgium, there is a huge variety of stakeholders for the blue economy, science-policy interface, research and many non-governmental organisations. However, events, jobs or even free training do not reach recent graduates or since they are new, it is difficult for them to join. We are looking to bridge this gap, connecting them to these stakeholders and connecting them with other ECOPs who have overcome this challenge via peer-to-peer learning or mentorship and the creation of spaces for this to happen.

After two years our team has grown and is based on voluntary work and financial support from the National Decade Committee for Belgium.

The ECOP Belgium team is a dynamic group of marine scientists and advocates, driven by co-coordinators Juana Jimenez and Arthur Deviaene, who provide the strategic backbone for the group. Juana, based at the Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ), works as an International Liaison Officer focusing on creating synergies between national policies and global initiatives like the Ocean Decade. Arthur brings expertise in Marine Protected Area governance and coral restoration, working to bridge the gap between scientific research and participatory, community-led ocean management.

The group is composed of two main task teams. First, the Communication Task Team works to amplify the voices of early-career professionals through storytelling and digital engagement, while ensuring that opportunities are accessible and visible. This group includes Erin Villanueva, who curates the community newsletter, sharing job and training opportunities, highlighting events, and focuses on biodiversity monitoring, and Lilly Bucher, who manages their LinkedIn presence and specializes in maritime spatial planning and habitat restoration. They are supported by science communication advisor Tom Janssen, the founder of Creators For Climate, who provides strategic expertise in environmental storytelling to help ocean research reach a wider public audience.

The second group is the Events & Networking Task Team, which focuses on building a strong, supportive community through peer-to-peer mentoring and informal meetups. This team is led by Margarita López-Velosa, a marine biologist at the UN Decade Coordination Office for Ocean Data Sharing, who focuses on making ocean data more accessible and connected for decision-makers. Working alongside her is Dr. Rhea Thoppil, a polar biologist who specializes in organizing dynamic seminars that bring together professionals from diverse disciplines to spark collaborative action for ocean sustainability.

Through these efforts, the team plays a central role in strengthening community engagement, increasing the visibility of ECOP initiatives, and fostering a connected network of early-career ocean professionals across Belgium.



First ECOP gathering at InnovOcean Campus 2023: Alumni and students from the international master programmes in Belgium (IMBRSea, Oceans and Lakes, TROPIMUNDO, MAR, ECT).
Credits: Johan Meylemans.

Impact

Since launching at the InnovOcean Campus in 2023, ECOP Belgium has grown from an initial spark of motivation into a thriving community. That first gathering was the foundation for our mission and vision, bringing together 100 early-career professionals from prestigious international master's programs like IMBRSea, Oceans and Lakes, TROPIMUNDO, MAR, and ECT. Over the past two years, our reach has expanded significantly; we have engaged with more than 200 ECOPs during the VLIZ Marine Science Day and facilitated four alumni-student exchanges, connecting 120 students with mentors and peers to bridge the gap between education and the professional world.

Our impact extends beyond networking into professional development and high-level representation. We have become a vital link between major ocean institutions and the next generation of leaders, ensuring that ECOPs don't just listen to the conversation but help lead it. A standout achievement is our coordination of the call for the 7th World Conference on Marine Biodiversity (WCMB 2026); as a result, three ECOPs now sit on the scientific committee, playing a key role in shaping this international event. Furthermore, we have worked closely with EU4Ocean and EuroGOOS to co-design online training on data management for sustainable development, showcasing a collaborative model where experienced experts and ECOPs lead together.

Throughout this journey, our digital presence across our newsletter,

Instagram, and LinkedIn has served as a heartbeat for the community, keeping everyone up to date on opportunities and celebrating the collective achievements of the Belgian ocean community.



Communication task team from ECOP Belgium node. Credits: Tom Janssen.

ECOP Belgium's digital presence shows consistent growth across its main communication channels, with clear signs of increasing visibility and reach. On LinkedIn, the page currently stands at 1,705 followers, ECOP Belgium is on track to reach 2,000 followers by Q3 2026. This reflects a stable and continuous growth pattern within a professional audience.

On Instagram, the strongest signal comes from content reach and exposure rather than follower structure. Over the last 90 days, ECOP Belgium content reached around 1,000+ ECOP accounts. This shows that content is consistently circulating beyond a relatively narrow following audience and maintaining visibility over time. Instagram is clearly functioning as an awareness and discovery channel, bringing the ECOP message to a broader and evolving audience. The newsletter, with a reach of approximately 200 people, plays a more focused role. It acts as a direct and reliable communication channel with an engaged audience, reinforcing continuity and connection beyond social platforms. Overall, ECOP Belgium's digital ecosystem is moving in a positive direction. LinkedIn is steadily building toward a larger professional community, Instagram is ensuring content visibility and discovery, and the newsletter maintains a stable direct link with its core audience. The combined picture is one of organic growth with increasing digital reach and strengthening presence across channels.

Plans ahead

Looking ahead, we are focused on turning the momentum of the last two years into a long-lasting legacy for the Belgian ocean community. Our immediate roadmap features more of the "casual networking" our members love, but with a deeper focus on peer-to-peer mentoring—starting with workshops that dive into the real-talk of PhD life and research. A major milestone for this year is the launch of our first Learning Lab on Marine Science Communication, a collaborative effort with 'Creators for Climate' and the OceanTeacher Global Academy (OTGA) designed to give ECOPs the tools to tell their stories effectively. We are also gearing up for a significant presence at the 7th World Conference on Marine

Biodiversity in Bruges, Belgium, in November 2026, where we will host a dedicated pre-event for master's students to ensure the next generation is front and center at this international gathering.

As we look toward 2030 and beyond, our vision is to move from "engagement" to "institutionalized leadership." By the end of the Ocean Decade, we aim to have established ECOP representation within every major marine policy body in Belgium, ensuring that "early-career" perspectives are a permanent fixture in decision-making. We are committed to tackling the systemic gap between education and employment by advocating for more entry-level roles and, crucially, paid internships across all Belgian marine institutions. We believe that financial inclusivity is key to a diverse and sustainable ocean workforce. In the long term, we want to see ECOP Belgium evolve into a self-sustaining engine for intergenerational exchange, where today's ECOPs become the mentors for the 2030 generation, creating a continuous ripple effect of knowledge and opportunity.



ECOP Programme representation at the EU Ocean Days 2026 Market place. From left to right: Erin Villanueva, Anna Spiessens, Anna-Maria Vafeiadou, Juana Jimenez, Rhea Thoppil and Lilly Bucher (ECOP Belgium team). Credits: Juana Jimenez.

Call for Action

To achieve this, we are putting out a general call to the wider Belgian and international ocean community. We aren't just looking for members; we are looking for partners in change.

- For Institutions & Organizations: We invite you to co-create mentorship programs and "intergenerational exchange" slots within your existing projects. We also challenge you to review your recruitment pipelines—let's work together to make level-entry jobs and fair, paid internships the industry standard in Belgium.

- For Experienced Professionals: The experts of today are the bridge to the future. We welcome you to join our networking events not just as speakers, but as collaborators ready to listen and learn from the fresh perspectives ECOPs bring to the table.

- For Potential Partners: Whether you are in tech, policy, or the arts, if you share our vision for a sustainable ocean, our door is open for collaborative projects that can bridge the gap between scientific offer and societal demand.

By joining forces now, we can ensure that by the time we meet at the Rio Ocean Decade Conference in 2027 and look toward the 2030 finish line, the Belgian ECOP community isn't just participating in the Decade—we are defining it.

Communication Channels

https://www.linkedin.com/company/ecop-belgium/

https://www.ecopdecade.org/belgium

belgium@ecopdecade.org

https://www.instagram.com/ecopbelgium/

Newsletter:

https://earlycareeroceanprofessionalsbelgium.kit.com/cfb4be68aa

ECOP DACH

Introduction

The ECOP Programme Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (ECOP DACH) node was formally established in December 2023. DACH is an acronym in German standing for **D**eutschland (Germany), **A**ustria, and **C**onfoederatio **H**elvetica (Switzerland). Its mission is to increase visibility and connectivity for the ocean, including in landlocked regions, by strengthening a regional ECOP network and blue citizenship in German-speaking countries. Established in December 2023, the node is coordinated by volunteers. Founding member Cora Hörstmann (2023-2025) helped shape the node's early development. Laura Meyer (2023-2025) supported awareness-raising. The current coordination team consists of Anabel von Jackowski (2023-present), Tristan da Silva e Ornelas (2023-present), Marlen Schlotheuber (2025-present), and Paula Garcia Rodriguez (2025-present). Notable contributors also include Kim Nierobisch and Nuri Steinmann (German National Decade Committee ECOP representatives) and Gabriel Akoko Juma co-leading the *BlueCaD* project of the ECOP Programme with Anabel (https://www.ecopdecade.org/blueca dproject/). Coordination roles typically last around two years but remain flexible to ensure a stable team of four representatives.

Partnerships are primarily project-based rather than institutional, requiring continuous effort to identify and secure collaborators. Longer-term partners include German NDC ECOP representatives, who attend monthly internal meetings and contribute to public events, and the Ocean Teacher Global Academy (OTGA) supporting the BlueCaD project. Short-term collaborations include EU4Ocean, which funded *Plankton & Popcorn – The Ocean Movie Night*; the Lighthouse Foundation and Förde Küste, which supported the Ocean Youth Summit Kiel 2025; and DEEPWAVE e.V. and the Konsortium Deutsche Meeresforschung (KDM), which each provided travel support for two ECOPs to attend the Third UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France, in June 2025. Generally, conference participation is self- or employer-funded, which we gratefully acknowledge.



ECOPs at the National Ocean Conference in Berlin, May 2025. Credits: Natasha Jaspert.

Impact

The ECOP DACH node has had a small yet emerging impact since its launch in 2023. A 2023 community survey identified key structural challenges for ECOPs in the DACH

region, including limited professional networks, insufficient funding for outreach, constrained career opportunities, lack of mentorship, low salaries, language barriers, job insecurity, and unsafe working environments. In response, the coordinating unit prioritised strengthening professional connectivity and outreach. In 2024, although attempts to secure funding for a dedicated networking dinner were unsuccessful, the node contributed to several events, including participation in the Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona, Spain, co-chairing V.ECOP Days 2024, moderating an SOA Innovation Deep Talk, delivering a keynote at ICYMARE 2024, and supporting BlueCaD training in Malta. Across these activities, 5 ECOPs were actively engaged in formal roles or participation.

In 2025, ECOP DACH activity increased in both scope and visibility. Monthly community meetings were established, the Wellenbrecher podcast was launched, and attendance at high-level activities like the German National Ocean Conference, a side event at the UN Ocean Conference, workshop at ICYMARE2025, and organizing BlueCaD training in Kenya, actively engaged 8 ECOPs.Additionally, we coordinated Plankton & Popcorn - The Ocean Movie Night remotely at nine locations, involving 16 ECOPs on site and reaching 547 ocean enthusiasts.





Plankton & Popcorn - The Ocean Movie Night. Images from four of nine events between October-December 2025. Credits: various ECOPs.

Plans ahead

Current activities focus on community building and outreach. The LinkedIn group has been converted into a public page and the *Wellenbrecher* podcast has plans to expand its audience. In-person events and participation remain dependent on opportunistic funding and occur on a non-regular basis. To ensure longevity beyond the Ocean Decade, the node calls on institutions and funding bodies in the DACH region to systematically host the node as a network in governance structures and sustainable funding schemes. In particular, there is a need for sustained support for early-career-led outreach and networking activities, which are often volunteer-driven and resource-limited despite their demonstrated impact.

Communication Channels

https://www.linkedin.com/company/early-career-ocean-professionals-ecop-dach

https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12919716/

germany@ecopdecade.org

wellenbrecher.podcast@gmail.com

bluecad@ecopdecade.org

https://www.instagram.com/wellenbrecher.podcast/

https://www.ecopdecade.org/germany/



ECOP France

Introduction

The establishment of the ECOP France Node began in early 2025, with the initial objective of representing and mobilising the French Early Career Ocean Professional community in the context of the Third United Nations Ocean Conference, held in Nice from 9 to 13 June 2025. Following this initial mobilisation phase, the node was formally structured in November 2025 as a national platform dedicated to connecting, supporting, and amplifying the voices of ECOPs across France and its overseas territories.

France occupies a distinctive position in global ocean affairs. With one of the world's largest maritime spaces and territories connected to the Atlantic, Indian, Pacific, and Southern Ocean basins, France has a unique responsibility in ocean science, governance, diplomacy, conservation, and sustainable development. This geographic diversity is also reflected in the diversity of relationships that French communities maintain with the ocean, from mainland coastal regions to overseas territories.

In this context, the ambition of ECOP France is to build an inclusive, cross-disciplinary, and geographically representative network of early-career ocean professionals based in mainland France and its overseas territories.

The node aims to support career development, strengthen youth participation in ocean governance, and create bridges between science, policy, civil society, education, and public communication.

ECOP France is structured around three complementary working groups:

1. **Capacity Building and Training:** strengthens ECOP skills through workshops, webinars, peer-to-peer exchanges, and practical training activities.

2. **Advocacy:** promotes stronger youth inclusion in ocean decision-making and advances ocean justice, climate justice, and intergenerational equity.

3. **Communication:** increases the visibility of ECOP France, shares opportunities, and communicates ocean science and policy to wider audiences.

The Capacity Building and Training working group is coordinated by Dr. Mathieu Poupon, researcher in ocean biogeochemistry, climate science, and environmental policy at LOCEAN-IPSL; Margot Webster, marine biologist, conservationist, and scuba-diving instructor with experience in community-based marine resource management; and Alexander Kebbon, specialist in ocean governance and marine conservation, with a particular interest in Mediterranean cooperation.

The Advocacy working group is coordinated by Samira Ben Ali, climate and ocean justice advocate from Mayotte with expertise in environmental law, political science, and youth climate advocacy; and Lolita Couchene, environmental law and international relations specialist working on intergenerational justice, ocean advocacy, and environmental governance.

The Communication working group is coordinated by Luz Verónica Delvasto Algarín, ocean scientist and science communication professional working at the International Hydrographic Organization; and Maina Proust, European project officer at Nausicaá with a background in international relations, scientific cooperation, ocean advocacy, and communication.

Impact

The most significant milestone for ECOP France to date was its participation in UNOC3 in Nice. The conference provided a major opportunity to transform several months of virtual coordination into an active in-person presence, to introduce the node to a broader community of ECOPs and ocean stakeholders, and to strengthen the visibility of early-career ocean professionals in France.

UNOC3 also played a key role in consolidating the internal identity of the node. It enabled ECOP France members to meet in person, clarify shared priorities, and discuss the future structure of the network. Beyond the French community, the summit allowed us to connect with ECOPs from other national and regional nodes, exchange experiences, and identify common challenges, including the difficulty of securing financial resources and the reliance on voluntary engagement.



ECOP France Node meeting at the Third UN Ocean Conference, Nice, France, June 2025.
Credits: ECOP France node.

The conference was also an important moment for strengthening links with Francophone ECOPs, including participants from Pacific islands and other ocean-connected regions. These exchanges opened promising perspectives for future collaboration around capacity building, science-policy engagement, and French-speaking ocean communities.

Since this initial mobilisation, ECOP France has continued to grow as an emerging national community. The group is currently organised primarily through a WhatsApp community of 44 ECOPs, which serves as a first point of contact for coordination, opportunity sharing, and informal exchanges.



ECOP France in a panel "How ECOP Programme nodes help support ECOPs and promote ocean science and knowledge around the world: real examples, needs and challenges" of the "Voices of Ocean Action" event of the European Digital Ocean Pavilion at the Third UN Ocean Conference, Nice, France, June 2025. Credits: ECOP Programme.

We have also begun developing our public communication channels. Although still in an early stage, these platforms already provide a foundation for future outreach:

- Instagram: 3 initial posts introducing the node, its structure, and its working groups; 42 followers;
- LinkedIn: 72 followers;
- Mailing list: 145 email addresses collected from individuals interested in following ECOP France activities and receiving future newsletters.

These first indicators demonstrate a clear interest in the creation of a French ECOP community and provide a strong basis for future engagement. They also show that ECOP France can serve as a useful entry point for young professionals seeking opportunities, visibility, training, and connection within the ocean sector.

Plans ahead

The next phase for ECOP France will focus on consolidating the node's structure, expanding its activities, and strengthening its role as a national platform for early-career ocean professionals.

- **Structuring ECOP France**

A first priority is the formal structuring of ECOP France as a French association under the "loi 1901" framework. This legal status will allow the node to operate more effectively, hold a bank account, receive funding, manage logistical support, and organise events more sustainably. ECOP France is also exploring partnerships with major French ocean institutions, including the Institut de l'Océan of Sorbonne Université, to access meeting spaces, strengthen institutional connections, and support in-person events.

- **Developing ECOP France Activities**

ECOP France plans to develop two flagship initiatives. The first is an "**ECOP Highlight**" series, designed to showcase the work, profiles, and achievements of French and France-based ECOPs. The objective is to increase the visibility of early-career professionals and support their career development by amplifying their contributions. The second is an "**ECOP Webinar**" series, envisioned as a regular training and discussion programme. These webinars will

respond to needs identified within the ECOP France community and focus on practical skills relevant to ocean careers, such as working with ocean data, science-policy communication, proposal writing, stakeholder engagement, and career development.

Overall, ECOP France aims to become a durable, visible, and useful platform helping young ocean professionals connect, develop new skills, access opportunities, and contribute meaningfully to ocean science, governance, and sustainability.

Communication Channels

https://www.linkedin.com/company/ecop-france/

france@ecopdecade.org

https://www.instagram.com/ecopfrance?igsh=ZjI0ZGd1aHljeDFi

https://www.ecopdecade.org/france/

Form to fill to be added to the national WhatsApp group: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScpbKiZVy1l7dzp_WioBEQzydtUOTH47uNyh17A10o8k2Olww/viewform.

ECOP Greece

Introduction

ECOP Greece is the newly established national node created for early career ocean professionals based in or originating from Greece. Rooted in Greece's deep maritime heritage and its strategic role in the Mediterranean, ECOP Greece aims to build a strong, inclusive community of early career professionals working across ocean science, policy, conservation, and the blue economy. Despite the country's strong connection to the marine environment, ECOPs in Greece (GRECOPs) have historically lacked a dedicated national platform for coordination, collaboration, and representation.

The Greek node aims to create a structured and inclusive platform that empowers GRECOPs and strengthens their contribution to ocean sustainability at national, regional, and global levels. The node is designed to:

- **Build a strong community and network :** Connect ECOPs across Greece and those studying or working in the country, fostering collaboration and long-term professional relationships.

- **Provide tailored opportunities :** Facilitate access to Mediterranean-relevant research, national programmes, and industry partnerships aligned with Greece's marine and blue economy context.

- **Boost capacity development and skill building:** Organize workshops, webinars, and networking activities to enhance collaboration, leadership, project management, and science communication skills.

- **Enhance representation and visibility:** Ensure that Greek ECOP perspectives and challenges are represented in regional and global ECOP Programme activities and international ocean sustainability discussions.

- **Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration:** Bridge sectors such as oceanography, fisheries, shipping, marine governance, and the blue economy to promote integrated approaches to ocean challenges.

- **Increase recognition and impact:** Strengthen connections with regional and global networks to improve access to funding, mentorship, training, and collaborative opportunities.

This work is particularly relevant in Greece due to fragmented early career communities, limited structured collaboration mechanisms, and the current absence of a formal National Decade Committee (NDC).

Coordinators and main partners

ECOP Greece is fully volunteer-led, currently coordinated by:

- Naomi Krauzig (GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel)
- Evridiki Chrysagi (University of Hamburg)
- Sofia Darmaraki (Cyprus Marine and Maritime Institute)
- Foteini Patouna (ARCHELON)

Main partners, advisors and collaborators include:

- Greek marine research institutions and universities such as the University of the Aegean,
- Scientific networks such as the Oceanographers & Marine Bioscientists of Greece
- Emerging engagement with Ocean Decade stakeholders and governance structures, including the national focal point of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission at the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research.

Impact

As a newly established national node, ECOP Greece has made significant progress in developing a coordinated platform for GRECOPs and continues to grow. **Key achievements include:**

- Establishment of the first national ECOP network (148 members across platforms)
- Development of digital infrastructure supporting collaboration and outreach
- Creation of a national database of marine institutions and member expertise registry
- Increased national visibility through presentations at:
  - Department of Marine Sciences Anniversary Event (University of the Aegean, Mytilene, 4 October 2025)
  - Assembly Meeting of the Oceanographers & Marine Bioscientists Alumni Association (Online, 14 December 2025)

Ongoing efforts focus on consolidating and expanding the network through the development of a structured membership system, mailing list, and newsletter, alongside continued stakeholder engagement and collaboration within the ECOP Europe node.

Plans ahead

ECOP Greece aims to strengthen its role as a national platform for early-career ocean professionals by focusing on several strategic priorities. These include **strengthening institutional integration**, through active engagement in the establishment of a Greek National Decade Committee and ensuring ECOP representation within national governance structures, for example by contributing to consultation processes, participating in advisory

groups, and facilitating communication between early-career professionals and national stakeholders.

The node also seeks to **expand capacity development and community engagement activities**, building on both digital and in-person formats. Planned actions include the organization of regular community meetings (e.g. quarterly online gatherings), thematic webinars and workshops on topics such as ocean data, policy engagement, and science communication, as well as the development of mentorship frameworks involving senior experts from academia, policy, and industry. In addition, ECOP Greece aims to explore **new science communication formats**, such as podcast series or informal public engagement events (e.g. film screenings or discussion-based "ocean nights"), to broaden outreach beyond academic audiences and strengthen ocean literacy in Greece.

In parallel, ECOP Greece aims to **enhance operational sustainability** by establishing a legal and administrative framework and by developing access to funding opportunities at national and European levels. Given current constraints, activities will continue to follow a **flexible and opportunity-driven approach**, where larger events and initiatives depend on external funding and partnerships, while core activities (e.g. communication platforms and community engagement) remain sustainable within a volunteer-based structure.

Finally, the node plans to develop targeted and scalable initiatives to support its community. These include pilot microgrants for ECOP-led projects (such as outreach activities, small research collaborations, or science communication initiatives), the creation of thematic working groups focused on key national priorities (e.g. coastal management, marine pollution, blue economy), and the continued development of communication channels (e.g. newsletters, LinkedIn dissemination of opportunities). At the same time, ECOP Greece will strengthen collaboration with regional and global ECOP networks, particularly within ECOP Europe, to co-develop activities, share best practices, and increase the visibility and participation of Greek ECOPs at international level.

Call for Action

To support its continued development and long-term sustainability, ECOP Greece calls for stronger engagement from national and international stakeholders across the ocean sector.

In particular, ECOP Greece invites institutional support to integrate early-career ocean professionals into national governance processes, including participation in the development of a Greek National Decade Committee and related structures. Strengthening the role of ECOPs as active contributors is essential for the effective implementation of Ocean Decade priorities. The node also encourages engagement from senior scientists and professionals to support mentorship, knowledge exchange, and capacity-building activities, fostering stronger intergenerational collaboration.



Furthermore, ECOP Greece highlights the need for financial and in-kind support to sustain and expand its activities, including community-building initiatives, outreach, and coordination efforts.

Finally, ECOP Greece invites partnerships with academic institutions, research organizations, NGOs, and industry actors to co-develop initiatives and support ECOP-led projects. At the same time, early-career ocean professionals are encouraged to join the ECOP Greece network, contribute to its activities, and actively engage in shaping the future of the ocean community in Greece.

Communication Channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/greece/

greece@ecopdecade.org

www.linkedin.com/company/ecop-greece

tinyurl.com/Slack-ECOP-Greece

ECOP Italy

Introduction

The Italian node of the global ECOP Programme builds the national network of early-career ocean professionals working across disciplines to gather the new ocean generations and strengthen the science–society–policy interface. The initiative aims to build a young national community engaged in ocean-related issues, fostering capacity development, knowledge sharing, and career support while promoting ocean advocacy and public engagement. A key component of ECOP Italy's activities is its role in amplifying youth voices within decision-making processes, actively contributing to policy dialogue and encouraging the participation of early-career professionals in governance and ocean-related strategies. This action is enabled thanks to the direct participation in the coordination of the Italian National Decade Committee as well as in the Secretariat of the Italian Oceanographic Commission.

By creating synergies at national and Mediterranean levels and promoting transdisciplinary collaboration, ECOP Italy seeks to enhance ocean literacy not only as an educational outcome but as a driver of societal transformation and policy impact.

Impact

- Established the **Italian network** of Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs), connecting young researchers, practitioners and communicators across disciplines.

- Launched a **national survey** targeting ECOPs in Italy to identify barriers to engagement, career development challenges, and opportunities for strengthening participation in ocean-related activities.

- **Contributed to Ocean Decade** initiatives, including activities officially endorsed as Decade Actions, strengthening the role of early-career professionals within international frameworks. For example, it actively contributes to the Coastal Resilience ECOPs Worldwide Project (CREW) project as a member of the coordination group, a Decade Action endorsed under the DCC Coastal Resilience in 2026, supporting the integration of early-career perspectives into coastal resilience strategies and activities through ocean literacy and citizen science across more than 130 Global Coast Pilot Sites.

- Co-organized and facilitated **science–policy–society dialogue** through targeted initiatives such as the participation to the Arctic Circle Rome Forum – Polar Dialogue (2026), where ECOP Italy and APECS Italy created the

joint booth “Bridging New Ocean and Polar Generations”, enabling direct engagement between ECOPs, policymakers, and research institutions.



Joint booth “Bridging New Ocean and Polar Generations” with ECOP Italy and APECS at the Arctic Circle Rome Forum - Polar Dialogue, Rome, Italy, March 3-4, 2026.
Credits: Alessandro Gibertini.

Supported **capacity development and professional visibility** by enabling ECOP participation in high-level conferences, working groups, and international networks. For example, actively contributed to high-level scientific processes such as The International Symposium on Transformative Ocean Science (Venice, Italy, March 2026), where ECOP Italy supported the inclusion of early-career professionals by facilitating dedicated access for selected ECOPs to interdisciplinary Working Groups, enabling their direct contribution to the co-design of strategic outputs (e.g. White Paper, Policy Brief, Strategic Roadmap) linked to the Ocean Pact.

Another example is the collaboration with summer schools, focused for example on numerical modelling (Advanced numerical methods for free-surface hydrodynamics) and blue skills (Blue Skills Summer School 2026).



International Symposium on Transformative Ocean Science. ECOP Italy contributed to interdisciplinary dialogue and strategic outputs linked to the Ocean Pact, Venice, Italy, March 24-26, 2026. Credits: Alessandro Gibertini.

- Participated in **national scientific events,** such as the conference “Ecological Education for Lands and Seas. Rights, Subjectivities, Ecosystems” (Catania, February 2026), contributing to the dissemination of Ocean Decade priorities, strengthening connections between research, communication and local communities and raising awareness on participatory education.

- Promoted ocean literacy and outreach excellence through initiatives such as the **EUDI Award for Marine Outreach 2026**, moderated by ECOP Italy to highlight and recognize impactful communication and engagement practices in the marine domain.

- Promoted **public engagement campaigns** through social media and events, increasing visibility of ocean science and early-career voices.

Plans ahead

- Expand the network to increase **inclusivity and diversity**, reaching underrepresented regions, disciplines, and professional profiles.

- Institutionalize the **structural involvement of ECOPs in policy processes**, including advisory roles and formal representation in ocean governance frameworks.

- Create an **itinerary event** to engage ECOPs in universities, and the first ECOP Italy **annual conference**.

- Develop **long-term capacity development programmes** embedded within research infrastructures (RIs), moving beyond project-based training, including training on research vessels.

- Scale up **impact-oriented ocean literacy initiatives** and promote a **STEAM-based approach**.

- Develop and implement **ocean literacy and communication outputs**, including documentary and podcast storytelling.

Call for Action

ECOP Italy welcomes partnerships and funding opportunities to support its growth and future activities. Collaboration with institutions, research organizations, foundations, private partners, and other stakeholders can help create new opportunities for early-career ocean professionals to engage in ocean science, policy, and society in Italy.

Support for ECOP Italy will contribute to expanding the national network, developing training and capacity-building activities, promoting ocean literacy, organizing events, and producing communication initiatives such as documentaries, podcasts, and public engagement campaigns. These efforts will help strengthen early-career voices and support a more inclusive ocean community in Italy, the Mediterranean, and beyond.

Communication Channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/italy/

italy@ecopdecade.org

https://www.linkedin.com/company/ecop-italy/

https://www.instagram.com/ecop_italy/

https://discord.com/invite/m4bE7ht8dn

ECOP Netherlands

Introduction

The ECOP Dutch Node was established in the summer of 2024 as part of the global ECOP Programme under the UN Ocean Decade, with the aim of connecting and empowering early career ocean professionals (ECOPs) across the Netherlands (both mainland and Caribbean).

The Netherlands has a long-standing and complex relationship with water and the ocean, shaped by its geography, coastal infrastructure, maritime economy, and leadership in water management. This creates a unique environment where ocean science, policy, engineering and industry intersect. However, early-career professionals often face challenges such as fragmented networks, limited access to decision-making spaces, gaps between disciplines and sectors, as well as intergenerational communication and collaboration.

The ECOP Dutch Node was created to address these challenges by fostering an inclusive, interdisciplinary, and action-oriented community. Its mission is to strengthen the role of ECOPs in ocean sustainability by bridging science, policy, industry, and society, while promoting collaboration, visibility, and capacity development.

The node is coordinated by a volunteer-based Steering Comittee including the general coordinator Kjeld Werther, Mariana de Botton (ECOP Europe Deputy), alongside a multidisciplinary team of early-career professionals: Melisa Rodríguez, Alessia Ricchiuti, Floor van der Marck, Lara Baptista and Brigitte de Graaf. The node works closely with partners such as Utrecht University, NIOZ (Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research), the Sustainable Ocean Community, and is increasingly engaging with Dutch ministries, including the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, as well as other governmental bodies.

Impact

Since its establishment, the ECOP Dutch Node has rapidly grown into an active and visible community within the Dutch ocean space. The node has grown to a network of 200+ early-career ocean professionals, spanning academia, policy, industry, NGOs, communication amongst other ocean fields. Through events and meetups (including workshops, borrels, and film screenings), the node has fostered more interdisciplinary exchange and strengthened peer-to-peer connections.

Events and conferences

The node has played an active role in major national and international events, engaging 150+ participants across activities:

- Organization of a breakout session at the National Ocean Science Conference (NOSC) 2025, with continued involvement planned for 2026;

- Participation in panels and discussions at the UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3), ensuring ECOP representation in global dialogues;

- Contributions to conferences such as NIOZ events, Utrecht University symposia (UUNEC), North Sea Days and NL Polar Day.

A key highlight has been the co-creation of an interactive art piece, developed during NOSC 2025 with contributions from 50+ participants. Created using repurposed fishing nets and second-hand materials, the piece captured ECOP perspectives on the future of the ocean and was exhibited internationally at the Tidal Shifts Gallery during UNOC3 in Nice.

Capacity development and knowledge sharing

The node has delivered targeted initiatives such as a Data Management Workshop, engaging a number of participants, and focusing on FAIR and CARE data principles. These efforts contribute to strengthening technical and transferable skills within the ECOP community.

Science–policy interface

The ECOP Dutch Node is increasingly active in policy-related processes. It has been invited to contribute to discussions with Dutch ministries ahead of international negotiations (e.g., BBNJ PrepCom3), representing ECOP perspectives in national-level dialogues. This engagement reflects a growing recognition of ECOPs as relevant stakeholders in ocean governance.

Communication and outreach

Through LinkedIn, Instagram, newsletters, and collaborative campaigns, the node has reached more than 700+ individuals online, sharing opportunities, events, and ECOP voices. Communication efforts focus on accessibility, inclusivity, and storytelling to connect broader audiences to ocean issues.

Overall, the node has contributed to strengthening the ECOP identity in the Netherlands, creating tangible pathways for engagement, collaboration, and impact.

Plans ahead

Looking toward 2030 and beyond, the ECOP Dutch Node aims to consolidate its role as a bridge between disciplines, sectors, and governance levels within the ocean space. The node is looking to consolidate mainly within the following pillars:

1) Strengthening the science–policy–society interface

The node plans to deepen collaboration with governmental institutions and stakeholders to ensure representation of ECOPs in national and international ocean

governance processes, looking to strengthen the intergenerational ties and the position of ECOPs as a more formal stakeholder to take into account.

2) Expanding capacity development initiatives

Future activities will include workshops, training programmes, and mentoring opportunities focused on both technical and transferable skills, supporting ECOPs in navigating diverse career pathways, with collaborations with the Sustainable Ocean Community and different students associations all across the Netherlands.

3) Enhancing community engagement

The node aims to grow its network to more active members by 2027, continuing to build an inclusive and interdisciplinary community through events and collaborations.

4) Scaling communication and outreach

A renewed communication strategy will focus on storytelling, digital engagement, and visibility campaigns, with the goal of significantly expanding outreach and strengthening the ECOP voice in the Netherlands and beyond.

5) Fostering partnerships

The ECOP Dutch Node calls for partnerships with academic institutions, government bodies, NGOs, other youth bodies and private sector actors to co-create initiatives that support early-career professionals and advance ocean sustainability.

Call for Action

To ensure long-term impact, the node emphasizes the need for structural support, including funding mechanisms, institutional recognition, and integration of ECOPs into governance and decision-making processes.

Communication Channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/netherlands/

netherlands@ecopdecade.org

https://www.linkedin.com/company/ecop-netherlands-dutch-node/

https://www.instagram.com/ecop_netherlands/

The ECOP Dutch Node also counts with a Whatsapp Group where members are more engaged in quick response opportunities, fast interactions and overall announcements. To have access to this WhatsApp Group it is necessary to register as part of the node. The registry to become part of the ECOP Dutch Node can be found here : https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfYWulQmBSGTCBAoeclwMDxfiQ4NbI1By-ECqcHiV9_xygB8Q/viewform

ECOP Norway

Introduction

Norway has a deep and enduring connection with the ocean, which is integral to its cultural identity. The country's rugged coastline, fjords, fisheries and maritime history have shaped Norwegian history and culture. Today, the ocean continues to play a crucial role in Norway's economy. ECOP Norway aspires to a continuum of this ocean culture legacy through its members.

The governance structure of ECOP Norway is designed to be inclusive and participatory. It typically includes a steering committee composed of representatives from various sectors and regions within Norway and beyond. We aim to actively involve all members to ensure that the network meets the needs of early career ocean professionals. Established in February 2025, after months of planning and discussion with the Norwegian National Decade Committee (NDC), ECOP Norway aims to support early career ocean professionals by providing networking opportunities, professional development, and capacity-building activities with national and international partners.

Our vision is to anchor the foundations of a multidisciplinary cohort that connects the various stakeholders from academia, local authorities, industry and society to promote ocean sustainability for "The Ocean We Want". Our mission is to facilitate collaboration, knowledge exchange, and mentorship, helping to build a strong community of ocean advocates and experts. ECOP Norway aims to promote events, workshops, and training sessions tailored to the needs of its members, with the members to boost cross-sectoral cooperation in close association with the Norwegian National Decade Committee.

The Steering Committee (SC) members include Mathew K. Avarachen, Vilde K. Snekkevik, Else K. Welde, Ørjan S. Vabø, Juan Pardo, Hannah M. Hoven, dividing the roles for ECOP Norway operations. Houda Beghoura was a former member of the SC, supporting its activities over a year.

Impact

The SC represented ECOP Norway at various national and international forums. At the national level, the team participated in several formal and informal settings with other ECOPs. Similarly, we have managed to discuss with the NDC to have a continued contact and regular discussion to strengthen the collaboration.

Internationally, SC members represented ECOP Norway at the Sørlandet sail cruise, promoting ocean awareness with participants from across the Nordic region and beyond. They also took part in UNOC3 in Nice, France, alongside ECOPs globally.

The team contributed to the All-Atlantic Coastal Resilience Knowledge Hub, presenting regional examples at the European Parliament and European Commission in Brussels, highlighting community-led coastal resilience efforts across multiple countries across the Atlantic.

In Venice in March 2026, ECOPs participated in the International Symposium on Transformative Ocean Science, contributing to discussions supporting the EU's strategic Ocean Pact.





Left: *ECOP Norway members at the One Ocean Science Congress, Nice, France, June 2025. Credits: Juan Pardo.* ***Right:*** *ECOP Norway members at the ECOP Programme informal gathering at the UN Ocean Conference, Nice, France, June 2025. Credits: Evgeniia Kostianaia.*





Left: *ECOP Norway on board Sørlandet sail cruise, Arendal, Norway, June 2025. Credits: Trygve Heide.*
Right: *ECOP social gathering, Tromsø, Norway, August 2025. Credits: ECOP Norway.*





Left: *ECOP Norway at European Commission, as part of AAORIA 2025, Brussels, Belgium, September 2025. Credits: Thomas Blairon, Pixelshake.*
Right: *ECOP Norway at Transformative Ocean Science Symposium 2026 to support the EU Ocean Pact, Venice, Italy, March 2026. Credits: G. M. Macrì, V. Tulli - CNR, Italy.*

Plans ahead

The SC plans to stay connected with ECOPs in Norway and beyond through regular virtual events, including collaborations with other ECOP nodes. It will also continue organizing physical gatherings across Norway. In addition, the SC is in discussions with leaders of "Polhavet 2050," a strategic national initiative with over NOK 2 billion in funding aimed at advancing understanding of the Arctic Ocean as an interconnected system over the next decade.

Communication Channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/norway/

norway@ecopdecade.org

https://www.linkedin.com/company/ecop-norway/



ECOP Portugal

Introduction

The Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOP) Programme Portugal Node was established in June 2025 to provide a platform for the next generation of ocean leaders. Portugal is more than just a coastal country; we are a true ocean nation. From the wild Atlantic cliffs to the unique ecosystems of the Madeira and Azores archipelagos, our node exists to inspire and connect those dedicated to protecting this vast blue heritage. Our mission focuses on fostering ocean culture, demystifying maritime careers, and building a strong, inclusive network. Portugal holds a unique strategic position in the Atlantic, and our work addresses key challenges such as job instability and the gap between scientific research and policy-making. Our node is vital because:

- **Empowering New Leaders:** Through skill-building events and knowledge sharing, we prepare youth for the challenges of the Blue Economy.
- **Connecting Mainland and Islands:** We act as a bridge between professionals across the entire national territory, celebrating the diverse marine wealth of our islands and coastline.
- **Science-to-Policy Interface:** We ensure that scientific evidence translates into effective maritime policies and citizen engagement.

The success of ECOP Portugal is the result of a collective effort. The node is led by a multidisciplinary team, coordinated by Mélinda Maria Marie-Jeanne Martins (Oceanographer) and Leonor Oliveira Neves (Lawyer), working alongside our dedicated Core Team. This team, including our department coordinators and founding members, is responsible for the daily execution of all our initiatives and activities.

We collaborate closely with the Portuguese National Committee for the Ocean Decade and leading national research institutions. These professional partnerships are key to providing mentorship and real career opportunities, ensuring that Portuguese scientific excellence leads to practical action for a healthy ocean.

Impact

We are incredibly proud of the rapid growth of our network. Our greatest success has been the creation of a vibrant WhatsApp community, launched following a national survey via Google Forms. This survey allowed us to identify the core issues facing young professionals in Portugal and gave them a direct way to choose how to get involved and sign up for our newsletter. By analyzing the survey results, we have pinpointed the specific challenges of Portuguese ECOPs, ensuring our initiatives meet real-world needs.

Our impact is clearly reflected in the invitations we receive to speak at prestigious universities and research centres. Following a successful talk with Marine Biology students (University of Algarve), we have been invited to present ECOP Portugal at CIIMAR (Porto) in May 2026, strengthening our ties with the scientific community. We have observed a tangible shift in how ECOPs organise themselves. Previously, young professionals often worked in isolation; today, they have a collective voice. The fact that leading institutions are now reaching out to us to engage with their students proves that ECOP Portugal has become the essential partner for ocean talent in the country.

We maintain a strong presence on Instagram and LinkedIn, where we connect professionals and share industry opportunities daily.

Plans ahead

Our focus is on sustainability and expanding our reach across the entire national territory, including the islands:

- **Monthly Webinar Series:** Launching regular webinars tailored to the technical skills and career paths of Portuguese ECOPs.
- **Talent Showcase:** Creating a platform to highlight our members and their networking needs, connecting them directly with senior professionals and industry leaders.
- **Academic Integration:** Working closely with university departments to ensure ECOP Portugal is a core part of the student experience from day one.

Call for Action

We invite research centres, businesses, and public bodies to join us. We are looking for mentors and partners willing to invest in the “Ocean Power” of the next generation, ensuring that Portugal's maritime policies are built alongside those who will inherit the future of our seas.

Communication Channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/portugal

portugal@ecopdecade.org

https://www.linkedin.com/company/ecop-portugal/

https://www.instagram.com/ecop_portugal/

Become a Member: https://forms.gle/LhNtWRUbRWsWCrSr8

ECOP Spain

Introduction

ECOP Spain was established in 2023, with the vision of being represented in the Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona in 2024.

Spain has a very close relationship with the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, and there were several initiatives to seize:

- Potential of the Decade of the Ocean.
- Promotion of the Blue Economy at national and international level.
- European Commission Horizon EU Mission: Restore our Ocean and Waters.
- Innovations all over the world focusing on startups developing solutions for the ocean and climate change.

The goal was to create a community of practice which is a network of ECOPs who take part in collective learning where each individual shares their knowledge with others in the group; as well as to create a network of ECOPs in Spain to share opportunities, create meaningful networking and facilitate exchange of ideas, knowledge and experience.

Tackling ocean issues needs collaboration from multiple stakeholders, the ocean needs a transdisciplinary approach, where different academic disciplines and non-academic stakeholders work together: science, policy, public and private sectors but we can't forget about innovation; innovation is key to achieve ocean sustainability but this is not limited to technological innovation.

ECOP Spain is formed by:

Inés Mas de la Peña, a driven professional working at the intersection of entrepreneurship and ocean innovation. With a Master's in Climate Change from the University of Copenhagen, she is currently Program Manager on adaptation, resilience and blue economy projects at Climate KIC, focusing on entrepreneurship across East Africa.

Lucía Millán Agudo, who works at the Institut de Ciències del Mar (ICM-CSIC) in Barcelona where she is involved in several projects regarding benthic habitats and their responses to climate change. She has experience in nature management, Marine Protected Areas, climate change adaptation and the intersection between science and policy-making. She has a MSc in Biodiversity, Conservation and Restoration from the University of Antwerp.

Sara Mohamed Santamaría, a marine scientist with experience in trophic ecology, sustainable fisheries, and ocean outreach. Marine Sciences graduate currently working at the Spanish Oceanographic Institute (IEO-CSIC) in Málaga, contributing to the

Marine Strategy Framework Directive through the study of trophic networks and the evaluation of Good Environmental Status (GES) within marine ecosystems.

Xabier López-Alforja, an ECOP and researcher currently pursuing a PhD in Marine Microbiology at the Institut de Ciències del Mar (ICM-CSIC) in Barcelona. With a background in marine sciences, master graduate both in marine ecology, and bioinformatics and biostatistics, he studies microbial communities to understand their role in marine ecosystems and climate change.

Sandra Ramirez-Calero, a marine Biologist with expertise in reef-associated ecosystems, climate change, and conservation. Currently finishing a PhD at the Institut de Ciències del Mar (ICM-CSIC) in Barcelona, where she is actively involved investigating the impacts of extreme climatic events on the ecology and resilience of key benthic ecosystems, such as the coralligenous.

Impact

In 2024, during the Ocean Decade conference in Barcelona, ECOP Spain got funding to make a side-event to facilitate networking opportunities for ECOPs, enabling them to connect with experienced professionals and mentors in the field. With more than 180 participants, the event included a photography exhibition organized together with Onewater and the projection of the documentary "The Spirit of Our Sea" which is part of the project SOS Somos OceanoS (We Are Oceans).



Event organised by ECOP Spain during the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference, Barcelona, Spain, April 2024. Credits: ECOP Spain.



ECOP Spain members at the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference, Barcelona, Spain, April 2024.
Credits: ECOP Spain.

In 2025, ECOP Spain was invited to a round table at the Ocean Career Day in The SeaWilding Conference in Barcelona called “Blue future: the voice of the Ocean's Youth”. Furthermore we were invited to the Panel “Innovation and Entrepreneurship led by ECOPs” at the UN Ocean conference in Nice.



ECOP Spain presence in the roundtable “Blue future: the voice of the Ocean's Youth” of the SeaWilding Conference, Barcelona, Spain, October 2025.
Credits: ECOP Spain.



ECOP Spain presence in the Panel “Innovation and Entrepreneurship led by ECOPs” at UN Ocean Conference, Nice, France, June 2025.
Credits: Tim Steppich.

In the beginning, we launched a survey to reach Spanish ECOPs and understand the diverse needs and priorities of ECOPs in Spain and we obtained over 100 responses.

Regarding communication, email outreach remains an important tool throughout the programme, the launch of our LinkedIn page has significantly broadened our external engagement. Through this channel, we reached over 700 individuals and established a dynamic platform for disseminating opportunities, updates, and relevant ECOP-related content.



ECOP Spain members at the UN Ocean Conference, Nice, France, June 2025.
Credits: Tim Steppich.

Plans ahead

ECOP Spain is working on strengthening both external and internal communication. Externally, we have started conversations with the IEO-CSIC and ICM-CSIC youth networks, the Oceanic Platform of the Canary Islands (PLOCAN), and the European Marine Board to explore future collaboration. Internally, we are improving how we stay connected with Spanish ECOPs by making better use of LinkedIn to share opportunities and updates. This ongoing work will help us better define clear and realistic goals over the course of this year, looking ahead to 2030.

Communication Channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/spain/

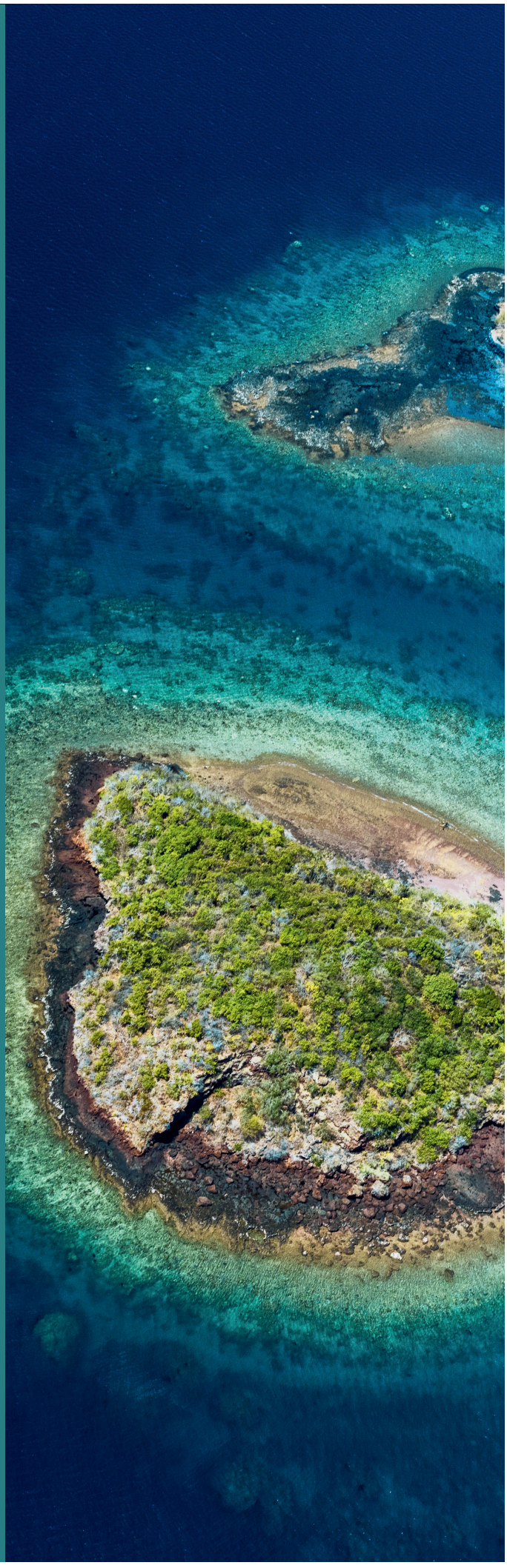
spain@ecopdecade.org

https://www.linkedin.com/company/ecop-spain/



AFRICA

- Regional overview
- ECOP Kenya
- ECOP Morocco
- ECOP Nigeria
- ECOP South Africa

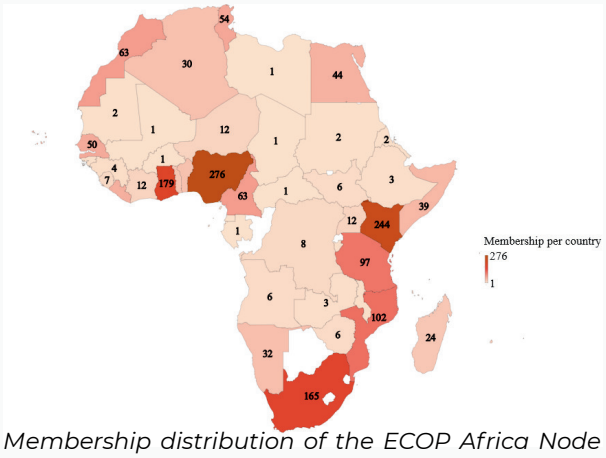


Credits: Gaby Barathieu/Ocean Image Bank

Regional Overview

Introduction

The ECOP Africa Node is one of the largest nodes in the ECOP Programme, with five sub-regional and 15 national nodes, over 1,700 members across 50 countries. It promotes long-term ocean sustainability by building networks and professional capacities for current and future ocean leaders. The node offers capacity-building initiatives aligned with the Ocean Decade Africa Roadmap's nine priorities, supporting career development and member engagement. It also advocates for African ECOP voices in policy and scientific dialogues on global ocean issues, strengthening regional commitments to ocean conservation, climate adaptation, and sustainable development beyond the Decade.



Membership distribution of the ECOP Africa Node in 2026. Source: ECOP Programme Global Database as of April, 2026).

The ECOP Africa node connects diverse ocean professionals, including scientists, decision-makers, students, artists, and conservationists. They face challenges such as limited access to higher education, funding shortages, few cross-sector collaborations, scarce employment opportunities, weak scientific capacity, and lacking governance mechanisms, which hinder their career development and integration into society.

Historical overview

The ECOP Africa Node was officially endorsed in 2021, led initially by Dr. Gabriel Juma until August 2022, then by Dr. Anthony Ndah until mid-2024. Major restructuring included establishing a Steering Committee, five sub-regional nodes across Africa and SIDS, and forming task teams for Communication, Fundraising, Outreach, and Capacity Development. These teams evolved into strategic hubs in 2024. Currently, the node operates under Dr. Sarah Viana's leadership with support from fifteen coordinators of the national nodes and a program assistant. Fifteen national coordinators serve as primary contacts for their respective countries. Several other nodes (Algeria, Angola, Cabo Verde, Chad, Comoros, Egypt, Mauritania, Namibia, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Tunisia) are in the endorsement or conceptualization phase, with expected endorsements through 2026-2027. The governance structure continues to be managed by the Steering Committee, ensuring regional coordination and strategic growth of the network across Africa.

Key partners

ECOP Africa Node has established partnerships with multi-sectorial stakeholders since 2021 aiming at maximizing collaborations, facilitating career opportunities for our members, integrating ECOPs into policy making, and delivering core activities. Our key supporting partners are: UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission for Africa and the Adjacent Island States (IOC-AFRICA); FAO EAF-Nansen Programme; Mohammed VI Foundation for Environmental Protection; Gulf of Guinea Maritime Institute; Revamp Rave Network; MyZalu; International Ocean Institute, Southern Africa; Western Indian Ocean – Early Career Science Network; OPERA Project - Mercator Ocean International.

Impacts

The ECOP Africa Node has made substantial contributions to our community, demonstrating a strong commitment to capacity building, regional collaboration, and policy engagement. The Node has actively engaged in a range of capacity-building initiatives, including webinars, in-person training sessions, educational campaigns targeting schools and marginalized communities, prize competitions, beach clean-ups, and policy dialogues. These activities have been made possible through dedicated efforts by national coordinators and local partnerships, significantly contributing to raising awareness, fostering engagement, and strengthening national networks. Among its most noteworthy achievements:

- **ECOP Africa Needs Assessment Surveys**

The first needs assessment survey was conducted in 2022 to understand the professional and personal profiles of the regional network, identify challenges and priorities for professional growth, and assess awareness of the Decade in the region; its findings are publicly available in the ECOP Africa Survey Report 2022–2023: Analysis and Results (https://www.ecopdecade.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/ECOP_Africa_Report.docx-2.pdf). A second survey on ECOPs from Africa and the Bay of Bengal was conducted in collaboration with FAO EAF-Nansen Programme. The insights will be published in 2026, helping to shape regional strategies, identify priorities, and strengthen stakeholder engagement to guide future planning and program development within the node.

- **ECOP Africa Node – Annual Ocean Fair**

The inaugural Ocean Fair, a five-day virtual event in December 2024, showcased 2025 career opportunities for African ECOPs, launched the Capacity Development and Ocean Literacy Hubs, and the ECOP Africa Node Newsletter. It fostered regional partnerships, celebrating progress and collaboration. The second edition is scheduled for later in 2026.

- **Special session at 13th WIOMSA Symposium - Mombasa, Kenya, September 2025**

The special session “Shaping Africa’s Ocean Future: Early Career Ocean Professionals’ Voices for Policy Action” at the 13th WIOMSA Symposium produced strategic policy recommendations to boost regional cooperation, capacity development, and integrate indigenous knowledge. The full report will be published in 2026 at the Western Indian Ocean Science Policy Series. The event was sponsored by FAO EAF-Nansen Programme, IOC-Africa, and supported by WIO-ECSN.



ECOP Africa Node coordinators (S. Viana, Regional coordinator; G. Juma, former Regional Coordinator; A. Rugendo, former ECOP Kenya Co-coordinator; C. Chioze, Southern Africa sub-regional coordinator; J. Mokaya, East Africa sub-regional coordinator), IOC-Africa representatives (I. Adewumi, Head of the Secretariat; E. Mwashinga, Programme Coordinator), WIO-ECSN (F. Mirobo, Secretary General), invited speakers (C. Kibuta; D. Otieno) and ECOP Programme members at the 13th WIOMSA Symposium in Mombasa, Kenya.
Credits: ECOP Africa Node.

Plans ahead

The ECOP Africa Node aims to significantly strengthen its impact across the continent by focusing on key initiatives. These include:

- **Institutional credibility:** Establishing transparent internal governance, following standard ethical principles, demonstrating tangible impacts, and fostering long-term stakeholder support will be clearly integrated into our mandate.

- **ECOP Africa Node Strategy (2026–2030)**: Implementing a strategic plan will guide the next five years, aligning activities with regional priorities, the UN Ocean Decade, and sustainable development goals for coordinated, impactful actions.

- **Optimal Capacity Development Hub**: Strengthening our ambition to serve as a central platform for training, mentorship, and skills development. The hub’s first in-person workshop is underway for implementation in 2026 in collaboration with UN Ocean Decade Capacity Development Facility and other key partners.

- **ABC-SEA (AfriBlue Catalyst for Stewardship & Educ-Action):** Advancing accessible blue learning approaches with the support of the Ocean Literacy Hub to encourage stronger connections between people, ocean ecosystems, and sustainable futures across Africa. The initiative supports inclusive engagement and promotes a culture of shared responsibility for the ocean among diverse stakeholders.

- **Embedding ECOPs into Africa’s decision-making:** Creating pathways for ECOP participation

into global policy dialogues. Establishing novel teams within the node such as a Science-to-Policy Task Team and Youth Desk will enhance youth engagement and integrate scientific expertise into policy processes.

- **Breaking the silos:** Promoting collaboration across sectors is essential for a truly integrated and holistic approach through resource sharing, knowledge exchange, and coordinated action.

A future envisioned by African ECOPs

Ensuring the ECOP Africa Node's sustainability beyond the end of the UN Ocean Decade in 2030 is vital, especially given the fact that Africa's youth population is projected to double by 2050. Transitioning into a formal association, as one of the options, could provide diversified funding and expand regional influence. Strong partnerships with governments, academia, and international agencies will support its longevity. Alternatively, maintaining it as a collaborative platform supported by regional or international bodies, with long-term funding and capacity-building, is also viable. Embedding these efforts within regional ocean governance and national plans will ensure ECOPs remain integral to sustainable ocean management for decades. All these options can be evaluated in more detail in coming years.

Call for Action

To guarantee the sustainable continuity of our initiatives, the node has an ongoing call for action that may be of interest of multiple stakeholders. This includes:

Node Membership: Register as a member of our network (https://www.ecopdecade.org/).

Collaborations and partnerships: In-house stakeholders to co-design joint activities linked to our hubs' initiatives in capacity building and ocean literacy.

Sponsorship and Support: Investors and philanthropic organizations for financial or in-kind support of our initiatives, including assistance to coordinating roles at the national nodes, task teams and hubs.

National Host Institutions: Country-specific partners to become the host institution of the following national nodes: Benin, Cameroon, Cote D'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, and Togo.

Annual Ocean Fair: Organizations offering professional opportunities are invited to showcase at our virtual event with a dedicated regional audience.

Communication Channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/africa/

africa@ecopdecade.org

https://www.linkedin.com/company/ecop-africa-node/

https://chat.whatsapp.com/FStoMLeYIO81QKmn9NApio

Newsletter: https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/strengthening-ocean-leadership-africa-welcoming-ecop-wje1ftrk=organization_guest_main-feed-card_feed-article-content



ECOP Kenya

Introduction

The ECOP Kenya node began to self-organise in February 2023, making it one of the earliest national nodes within the ECOP Africa regional network and a pioneer among East African nodes. Its formation addressed a recognised gap: Kenya's extensive coastline and rich maritime heritage had not yet been matched by a structured platform connecting and empowering the next generation of ocean professionals. The founding coordinator was Ms Pauline Mwangi, assisted by Michael Mugambi and Abigail Rugendo. As of May 2026, the node is coordinated by Josphat Nyagei Mokaya, ECOP Programme East Africa Sub-Regional Coordinator.

ECOP Kenya's work is grounded in the specific realities faced by young ocean professionals in Kenya:

- Limited and fragmented networking opportunities for ECOPs across academic, government, private, and civil society sectors.
- Scarce funding and fellowship opportunities targeting Kenyan early career professionals in ocean science and blue economy.
- Low ocean literacy among the general population, including potential ECOPs who do not yet see how their fields connect to the ocean.
- Insufficient representation of Kenyan ECOPs in national governance processes and international ocean science fora.
- Underutilised ocean innovation potential, particularly in aquaculture, mangrove restoration, carbon blue economy, and marine technology.

The IOC Sub-Commission for Africa and the Adjacent Island States (IOCAFRICA) and the FAO-NANSEN Programme have been key partners in supporting ECOPs across different areas. ECOP Kenya's work was also supported by Ocean Visions and the Global Ecosystem for Ocean Solutions (GEOS), both of which co-facilitated the inaugural 2023 workshop. The Office of Kenya's Climate Special Envoy represented at the inaugural in-person workshop, signalling early government-level engagement.

Impact

Inaugural In-Person Workshop - Nairobi, Kenya, July 2023

ECOP Kenya held its first major in-person gathering on 13 July 2023 at Somerset Westview Hotel, Nairobi, under the theme "Nature-Based Solutions: Co-Designing an Ocean Innovation Hub in Kenya." Co-facilitated with Ocean Visions and GEOS, the workshop brought together ECOPs from marine biology, environmental science, law, aquaculture, GIS, and blue economy backgrounds.

Key outcomes included a collective ocean innovation vision statement, identification of Kenya's ocean innovation strengths (youth expertise, grant-writing experience, indigenous knowledge, government goodwill), articulation of key barriers including limited data access and the absence of any ocean-specific innovation hub in Kenya, and initiation of discussions on a potential East Africa community node with Tanzania.



Michael Mugambi giving opening remarks during the inaugural meeting for ECOP Kenya. Credits: Brian Omondi.

First Africa Climate Summit - Nairobi, Kenya, September 2023

ECOP Kenya participated in the preparation of side events at the first Africa Climate Summit (ACS) – held under the theme "Driving Green Growth and Climate Finance Solutions for Africa and the World." The node's engagement embedded ocean and blue economy perspectives into continent-wide climate conversations, highlighting the link between ocean health and climate resilience.

UN Ocean Decade Conference - Barcelona, Spain, April 2024

ECOP Kenya participated in the UN Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona – a major milestone for the node. Representatives engaged directly with the global ocean science and policy community, representing Kenyan early career professionals on the world stage and strengthening linkages with the broader UN Ocean Decade framework.

Joint Side Event at the 13th WIOMSA Symposium - Mombasa, Kenya, September 2025

ECOP Kenya co-organised a joint side event at the 13th WIOMSA Symposium alongside IOC/IOCAFRICA and FAO – one of the most significant scientific gatherings in the Western Indian Ocean region. This collaboration placed Kenyan ECOPs at the centre of the region's leading marine science platform, creating rare opportunities for networking, visibility, and career development.

Internal Structure and Task Force Teams

ECOP Kenya established two internal Task Force Teams to generate substantive content and coordinate thematic work:

- Nature-Based Solutions Task Force: focused on ocean-climate restoration, carbon sequestration through coastal ecosystems, and community-based conservation.
- Aquaculture Task Force: focused on sustainable fish and crab farming, mangrove restoration, and the role of aquaculture in Kenya's blue economy and food security.

Reflections

In just over three years, ECOP Kenya has created, for the first time, a national platform where young Kenyans working across ocean-related fields can come together, share knowledge, and coordinate action. Through monthly webinars, the node has demystified ocean careers – demonstrating that marine biologists, environmental lawyers, GIS technicians, and blue economy entrepreneurs all have a role to play. Its participation from local workshops to the UN Ocean Decade Conference and the WIOMSA Symposium has tangibly elevated the visibility of Kenyan ECOPs in regional and global forums.

Ongoing activities

ECOP Kenya continues to pursue the following strands of activity:

- Monthly webinars on carefully selected ocean science and policy topics.
- Regular dissemination of funding, fellowship, and training opportunities through the ECOP Africa East Africa sub-regional network.
- Engagement with ECOP Africa regional activities, including continental campaigns, webinars, and capacity development initiatives.
- Contributing to global ECOP Programme Task Teams on Capacity Development, Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity, and Ocean Literacy.
- Maintaining presence on ECOP Programme communications platforms to keep Kenyan ECOPs connected to worldwide opportunities.

Plans ahead

Deepening Engagement with Kenya's Coastal Communities: ECOP Kenya plans to move beyond Nairobi-centric engagement to build a more geographically representative membership base, partnering with coastal universities, research stations, fisheries agencies, and community-based conservation groups in Mombasa, Kilifi, Lamu, Malindi, and Kwale.

Ocean Literacy and Outreach: The node will invest in ocean literacy programming targeted at students, universities, and the general public – particularly in Kenya's inland regions, where awareness of the ocean economy remains limited.

Regional Collaboration: An East Africa ECOP Community: Building on discussions initiated in 2023, ECOP Kenya will contribute to a broader East Africa ECOP cluster, forging closer collaboration with the Tanzania node and other communities in the Western Indian Ocean region to strengthen the collective voice of East African ECOPs in forums such as WIOMSA, IORA, and the Nairobi Convention.

Engagement with Policy Processes: ECOP Kenya aims to embed Kenyan ECOPs' perspectives

in national ocean governance, including Kenya's Blue Economy Strategy, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework commitments, and the High Seas Treaty. Building bridges with the Kenya Maritime Authority, Kenya Fisheries Service, and NEMA is a priority.

With a renewed leadership team, a growing and diversified membership, and a track record spanning local workshops to international conferences, ECOP Kenya is committed to carrying forward the momentum of its first three years into the second half of the Decade – ensuring that Kenya's ocean professionals are equipped, connected, and heard as the global community shapes the ocean governance architecture beyond 2030.

Calls for Action

ECOP Kenya warmly invites collaboration, partnerships, and support from all who share a commitment to a sustainable ocean and to the empowerment of the next generation of ocean leaders. Specifically, we welcome:

- Academic and research institutions offering training, mentoring, ship-board learning, or internship opportunities for Kenyan ECOPs.
- Government agencies and intergovernmental organisations seeking to integrate ECOPs into ocean policy, data, and governance processes.
- Funders, foundations, and private sector actors interested in supporting an ocean innovation hub in Kenya or node activities.
- Regional and international networks wishing to collaborate on joint events, publications, or advocacy for the WIO region.
- ECOPs in Kenya and the wider region who are not yet connected – we invite you to join!



Communication Channels

www.ecopdecade.org/kenya

kenya@ecopdecade.org

https://www.linkedin.com/company/ecop-kenya/

ECOP Morocco

Introduction

ECOP Morocco was conceptualized in 2022 and formally endorsed and activated as a national node in 2023 within the ECOP Africa regional framework. It was created as a national platform to connect Moroccan early-career ocean professionals, young researchers, students, educators, civil society actors, and institutional stakeholders working across ocean science, ocean literacy, coastal sustainability, climate action, and the blue economy.

Morocco's ocean context gives this node a particular relevance. The country has a strategic maritime position, with an Atlantic and Mediterranean coastline of about 3,500 km, a strong maritime heritage, and growing ambitions in the blue economy. At the same time, Moroccan marine and coastal spaces face pressures such as overfishing, illegal and unregulated fishing, plastic pollution, habitat degradation, coastal vulnerability, climate change impacts, acidification, and deoxygenation. These challenges require scientific knowledge, public engagement, institutional cooperation, and the meaningful participation of young professionals.

The mission of ECOP Morocco is to strengthen the role of young professionals in building a sustainable, inclusive, and science-formed ocean future for Morocco. The node works to make young ocean professionals more visible, better connected, and more active in ocean-related education, research, policy dialogue, and civic engagement. Its work is organized around five complementary functions: community building, capacity development, ocean literacy, science-policy dialogue, and African/South-South cooperation.

Dr. Othman Cherkaoui Dekkaki, National Coordinator of ECOP Morocco, coordinates the node. The coordination team includes active contributors working on ocean literacy, capacity development, partnerships, communication, and reporting, including Sophia Laarissa, Houda El Hadad, Ikhlas Ait Youssef, Ayoub Achbaro, Chouaib Bentabet, and other members of the ECOP Morocco community. The node also acknowledges the contribution of Dr. Hind Azidane, the former national coordinator, who developed the node early on.

ECOP Morocco operates within the broader ECOP Programme, ECOP Africa, and Ocean Decade framework. These are referred to here as programme framework and support structures, not as partners. National and project-level collaborators have included the National Commission for Education, Science and Culture of the Kingdom of Morocco, Mohammed V University of Rabat, the Mohammed VI Foundation for Environmental Protection, the Hassan II

International Center for Environmental Training, the Economic, Social and Environmental Council, IOI Ocean Academy Morocco, the Blue Schools network, Banlieues Climat, and academic and civil society partners involved in ocean, climate and youth engagement.

Impact

Since its inception, ECOP Morocco has progressed from a community-building effort into a visible national platform for youth-led ocean engagement. Its development can be read in three stages: conceptualization and structuring in 2022-2023, public activation in 2024, and transition toward more strategic and institutional ocean governance action in 2025.

The year 2024 was particularly important because it gave ECOP Morocco a visible public identity. The launch gathering Sip, Sea, and Snack helped bring together Moroccan ocean enthusiasts and young professionals around a shared sense of belonging. The Eco Chill sessions then allowed the node to experiment with accessible formats for ocean literacy, combining science communication, marine biodiversity, legal perspectives, ocean culture and collaborative reflection.

In 2025, ECOP Morocco entered a more institutional phase. Campus Bleu 2025, organized with Mohammed V University of Rabat and Banlieues Climat, mobilized students, researchers, associations and institutional actors around ocean, climate, and youth engagement. The ECOP Morocco Ocean Dialogue, held on 30 April 2025 in Rabat, created a structured space for young ocean professionals, researchers, civil society actors and institutions to discuss Morocco's strategic priorities ahead of the Third UN Ocean Conference in 2025. The ECOP Morocco Conference, held in Rabat on 23-24 October 2025, further strengthened the node's African and South-South dimension and culminated in the Rabat Declaration.



Campus Bleu 2025 inaugural conference, Mohammed V University of Rabat.
Credits: ECOP Morocco/Mohammed V University of Rabat/Banlieues Climat.



Projection-débat de CH3EB: Voix de jeunesse pour un avenir durable, Campus Bleu 2025.
Credits: ECOP Morocco/Banlieues Climat.

Table: ECOP Programme Morocco node activities in 2022-2026.

Date or period	Activity	Main contribution
2022-2023	Conceptualization, endorsement, and structuring of ECOP Morocco	Formation of a national youth ocean network aligned with ECOP Africa and the Ocean Decade.
17 Jan. 2024	Launch gathering: Sip, Sea, and Snack	Public activation of the node at Mohammed V University of Rabat, strengthening community identity and presenting ocean literacy and partnership priorities.
1 Feb. 2024	African Taskforce Meeting	Participation in an Africa-focused meeting at the Hassan II International Center for Environmental Training, connecting ECOP Morocco with continental priorities.
10-12 Apr. 2024	2024 UN Ocean Decade Conference, Barcelona	International engagement and knowledge exchange on plastic pollution, biodiversity, sustainable fisheries, and ocean conservation.
15 May 2024	Eco Chill session 8: Dialogues with the Deep	Interactive session on ocean communication, scientific storytelling, and public connection with the ocean.
22 May 2024	Eco Chill session 9: Navigating Biodiversity	Training and brainstorming on marine biodiversity, plastic pollution, overfishing, and coastal habitat destruction.
7-8 June 2024	Ocean Literacy World Conference and Venice Declaration	ECOP Morocco representation through Sophia Laarissa, reinforcing the node's ocean literacy positioning.
24 June 2024	Exploring the Ocean Decade: Insights from ECOP Morocco	Closing Eco Chill session on the Ocean Decade, mathematical modelling, ocean governance, ocean literacy, and marine conservation.
28 June 2024	National Dialogue on Blue Economy	Participation in the national dialogue on sustainable coastal and marine socio-economic activities.
14-17 Apr. 2025	Campus Bleu 2025: À la Rencontre de l'Océan	University-based mobilization around the ocean, climate, youth engagement, documentary debate, and climate training.
30 Apr. 2025	ECOP Morocco Ocean Dialogue for UNOC-3	Strategic dialogue with COMNAT and support from UNESCO's Participation Programme, producing recommendations on biodiversity, blue finance, and youth capacity.
23-24 Oct. 2025	ECOP Morocco Conference and Rabat Declaration	African youth-led ocean-climate dialogue, South-South cooperation, and adoption of the Rabat Declaration.
2026 onward	University awareness, Blue Schools cooperation, capacity development, and social oceanic awareness	Ongoing action-plan priorities for ocean literacy, training, partnerships, communication, and national membership recruitment.

Reflections

Looking back, the most important impact of ECOP Morocco is not only the number of activities organized, but the gradual emergence of a national youth ocean community that recognizes itself as part of Morocco's ocean future. Before the node became active, many young people interested in ocean-related topics were working separately, often within their own laboratories, universities, associations, or professional circles. ECOP Morocco helped create a shared space where these profiles could meet, exchange ideas, and see themselves as part of a broader national, African, and global movement. At the community level, ECOP Morocco has made young ocean professionals more visible. Students, researchers, educators, communicators, legal scholars, environmental activists, and young innovators have found through the node a platform to contribute, moderate sessions, write reports, organize workshops, facilitate discussions, and represent youth perspectives in ocean-related spaces. At the educational level, the

the node has helped make ocean issues more understandable and connected to everyday life through Campus Bleu, Eco Chill sessions, documentary debates, and training workshops. At the institutional level, the Ocean Dialogue and the Rabat Declaration showed that young professionals can contribute to recommendations, roadmaps, and policy-oriented discussions when they are given the space, trust, and responsibility to do so.

Several lessons have emerged from this work. Ocean literacy is most powerful when connected to local realities, culture, and youth aspirations. Young professionals need more than invitations to attend events; they need meaningful roles as co-designers, moderators, rapporteurs, authors, and facilitators. Morocco's ocean future will require hybrid skills combining science, communication, policy literacy, legal awareness, entrepreneurship, and community engagement. Finally, African cooperation is essential because many of the challenges faced by Moroccan ECOPs are shared by young professionals across the continent.

The central achievement of ECOP Morocco is therefore the creation of a youth-led ecosystem able to connect knowledge, action, and institutions.

Plans ahead

Looking toward the end of the Ocean Decade and beyond, ECOP Morocco aims to consolidate its work around five strategic priorities.

• **Strengthen ocean literacy** across universities, schools, and youth spaces by expanding Campus Bleu, Eco Chill-type sessions, and cooperation with the Blue Schools network.

• **Build a structured capacity-development programme** for Moroccan ECOPs, including recurring modules on science communication, ocean governance, blue economy, marine biodiversity, climate-ocean interactions, project writing, fundraising, and international negotiations.

• **Advocate for meaningful youth participation** in ocean-climate governance, with ECOPs contributing to agenda-setting, drafting, implementation, and follow-up in national and international processes.

• **Support innovation,** blue entrepreneurship, and local solutions related to marine conservation, coastal resilience, ocean data, citizen science, environmental education, and nature-based solutions.

• **Strengthen African and South-South cooperation** through joint webinars, regional working groups, shared toolkits, youth declarations,

and co-designed projects with other African ECOP nodes.

Beyond 2030, ECOP Morocco's ambition is to contribute to a generation of ocean professionals who are not only trained in ocean science but also capable of communicating knowledge, engaging communities, influencing policy, and developing sustainable solutions for coastal and marine systems.

Call for Action

ECOP Morocco warmly invites universities, public institutions, research centers, civil society organizations, foundations, donors, private sector actors, and international initiatives to support youth-led ocean action in Morocco and Africa:

- More training and mentorship opportunities for young ocean professionals;
- Access to internships, fellowships, fieldwork, and research infrastructure;
- Support for youth-led ocean literacy activities in schools, universities, and coastal communities;
- Seed funding for young innovators working on blue economy, citizen science, coastal resilience, and marine conservation;
- Stronger inclusion of ECOPs in national and regional ocean governance processes;
- Support for South-South exchanges between African ECOP nodes;
- Collaboration with universities and institutions to make ocean literacy and ocean-climate education more visible in formal and non-formal learning spaces.

Supporting ECOP Morocco means investing in a generation capable of linking science, civic engagement, and policy for the ocean Morocco needs.



Communication Channels

www.ecopdecade.org/morocco/

morocco@ecopdecade.org

https://www.instagram.com/ecop_morocco/

For enquiries about joining ECOP Morocco, proposing collaboration, supporting youth-led ocean literacy activities or contributing to capacity-building actions, please contact: morocco@ecopdecade.org.

ECOP Nigeria

Introduction

Founded in 2022, the Nigeria node aims to build vital skills and capacities in ocean science across Nigeria, particularly focusing on the scientific and technical expertise of Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs). The node is coordinated by National Coordinator Anthony Akpan (President of the Pan African Vision for the Environment (PAVE) and Nigerian National Ocean Decade Committee ECOP Focal Point) and Deputy National Coordinator Dr. Chinomnso Onwubiko (World Bank Scholar, Africa Centre of Excellence in Coastal Resilience (ACECoR), and PhD Researcher in Integrated Coastal Zone Management).

The support of the node will encompass various aspects, including short- and long-term training, mentorship and professional development programs, leadership training, assistance in engaging with international policy discussions, a matchmaking service for accessing research vessels and infrastructure, and other key priorities. We plan to identify ECOPs through a desktop research study of ocean-related networks, associations, and universities in Nigeria that offer courses in Ocean Sciences and Marine Sciences. Following this, we will compile a comprehensive database of the identified ECOPs from our research.

To foster sustainable development in the maritime sector, several important initiatives are centred around the Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs) network in Nigeria. These initiatives include officially launching the Nigerian ECOPs network, hosting workshops to pinpoint professional challenges, and educating members about their vital roles in reaching the goals of the Ocean Decade. To close regional gaps, the ECOPs Connect initiative promotes networking across the Atlantic, bolstered by focused ocean literacy education programs and strong media advocacy. Financial sustainability is pursued through local fundraising efforts with National Maritime organisations and collaboration with global partners on grant proposals. Additionally, there's a strategic focus on raising awareness and building capacity among youth about the Marine and Blue Economy value chain, showcasing global career opportunities while implementing specialised educational programs for schools and coastal communities. Ultimately, these initiatives aim to empower local youth, ensure food security, create jobs, and alleviate poverty across Nigeria's blue economy.

Impact

ECOP Nigeria members attended the Coastal Ocean Environment Summer School in Nigeria and Ghana (COESSING) during August 2024 at the University of Lagos. COESSING is a UN Ocean Decade

Project aimed at advancing ocean science in West Africa and furthering ties between scientists in West Africa and elsewhere around the globe.

On 19-21 August 2024, ECOP Nigeria coordinator Anthony Akpan, co-coordinator Dr. Chinomnso Onwubiko, and Dr. Ngozi Oguguah attended the US-West African Coastal Resilience Research Consortium at Lagos State University.

In November 2025, Dr Chinomnso Onwubiko attended the UNESCO IOC - Environmental DNA (eDNA) Training for Africa and the Adjacent Island States in Accra, Ghana.

In April 2026, Dr. Chinomnso Onwubiko was selected as an ECR to attend the CoastPredict General Assembly in Merida, Mexico.

Plans ahead

To establish a strong and impactful Blue Economy Working Group, a coordinated set of outreach, engagement, and capacity-building activities will be implemented. Central to this effort is the delivery of structured ocean literacy campaigns across schools and universities, using age-appropriate modules, interactive workshops, and digital content to introduce key concepts such as sustainable ocean use, climate change, and marine conservation. These campaigns will be complemented by focused awareness initiatives on the BBNJ Agreement and Marine Protected Areas, where tailored sessions, debates, and simulation exercises will help students understand global ocean governance and conservation tools in practical terms.

To build a vibrant and inclusive community, targeted membership drives will be launched in universities and professional networks, leveraging student associations, social media campaigns, and ambassador programs to recruit and retain students and early-career professionals. This will be reinforced through the hosting of an ECOPs Welcome Webinar, designed as an onboarding platform to welcome new members to the network's mission, ongoing projects, and opportunities for collaboration and leadership. Furthermore, the initiative will organise a regional networking event that brings together ECOP nodes across Africa and connects them with global counterparts, fostering knowledge exchange, peer learning, and collaborative project development. This event will include panel discussions, breakout sessions, and partnership clinics aimed at co-creating solutions for blue economy challenges in the African context. Collectively, these actions will not only strengthen awareness and capacity but also build a dynamic pipeline of engaged young professionals driving sustainable ocean governance.



ECOP Nigeria National Coordinator Anthony Akpan at the One Ocean Science Congress, Nice, France, June 2025.
Credits: PAVE Nigeria.



ECOP Nigeria National Coordinator Anthony Akpan at the OceanRise Sea Level Rise & Coastal Resilience Summit, Nice, France, June 2025.
Credits: PAVE Nigeria.

Communication Channels

ECOP Nigeria welcomes you to join the network and share your activities and opportunities related to the UN Ocean Decade.

https://www.ecopdecade.org/nigeria/

nigeria@ecopdecade.org

ECOP South Africa

Introduction

ECOP South Africa was officially established in June 2025, having first emerged in 2024. Over the last 2 years, our visibility within the South African Ocean and Blue Economy Landscape has expanded. ECOP South Africa aims to foster cross-country collaboration for a more sustainable future by uniting diverse stakeholders. Furthermore, we aim to support our member ECOPs in various fields by addressing challenges, promoting job opportunities, and facilitating knowledge transfer. Our vision for this node includes building a community of emerging researchers, connecting them nationally and internationally, and ensuring they are adequately supported through mentoring and training opportunities. We strive to foster inclusivity, diversity, and accessibility within our network, providing opportunities for professional development, collaboration, and leadership. By promoting ocean literacy, community engagement and sustainable practices, we hope to inspire positive change and drive towards a more equitable and resilient ocean future for generations to come.

ECOP South Africaonly exists today due to the work of various volunteers over the years, in no particular order: Mia Strand, Lizzy Makhubela, Caitlin Wale, Buhle Francis, Riesna Audh, Faith February, Nina Faure Beaulieu, Sina Wallschuss, Makwena Melita Sebone Margaretha Burger, Mishka Rawatlal, Tayla Gifford, Khotso Mogotlane, Melissa Cairns, Palisa Ntsala, Dinah Mukhari, Zara Prew, Eugin Bornman and Brishan Kalyan. All of these people are past or present steering committee members who have put in the time and effort to get the node where it is today. Together and through supporting partners such as the Institute of Coastal and Marine Research at Nelson Mandela University, Khotso's Hotlane Organisation, Sea The Bigger Picture and Loticlinks Foundation, ECOP South Africa is steadily growing.

The node is well-positioned to play an increasingly important role in supporting South Africa's contribution to the UN Ocean Decade and SDGs by empowering ECOPs and strengthening engagement and inclusivity in ocean science.

During 2025, the node participated in various conferences to gain traction within the community and increase visibility in the country:

- Ocean20, 4-5 November 2025;
- Institute of Coastal and Marine Research, Nelson Mandela University, CMR symposium, "Science to Impact", 12-14 November 2025;
- FAO EAF-Nansen Programme Coffee Deck Seminar: Supporting African Young Ocean Professionals, autumn 2025;

- Ocean Steward Science Session, 24-25 November 2025.

The node has hosted several beach and underwater clean-up events in 2026 as well as educational/capacity-building webinars. All events were well attended and these activities will continue throughout the year, so please do get in touch.

ECOP South Africa is managed by a steering committee with several portfolios – namely (1) Newsletters, (2) Outreach and recruitment, (3) Training, (4) Webinars and workshops, (5) Ocean Literacies, (6) Diversity, equity and inclusion and (7) Social media and communications. These all feed into our 'Fundraising' portfolio, which is overseen by a Node coordinator. During 2026 our immediate portfolio goals are to: target three under-represented groups to improve their representation as members of the nodeECOP SA; highlight at least 12 ECOP voices across the 2026 newsletters; host one webinar per month; connect with existing ocean literacy organisations and events; host a PechaKucha event in 2026; roll out the existing Code of Conduct for formal signing by all current and new members; clearly communicate the anonymous reporting pathway for harassment or abuse; select two existing Ocean Literacy toolkits or "Career Guides" and translate them into at least two local languages (e.g., isiXhosa and isiZulu); partner with 3-4 creators or organisations in 2026 for cross-promotion and joint campaigns; share ECOP community stories on our social media channels weekly; identify and act on funding and partnership opportunities (identify and build at least two in 2026); and lastly, liaise with the National Decade Committee and report on impacts.

Call for Action

Please get in touch with us using the channels below should you or your organisation like to partner with ECOP SA or assist in sponsorships. This is an open call and will remain so as we are always looking to grow.



Communication Channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/south-africa/

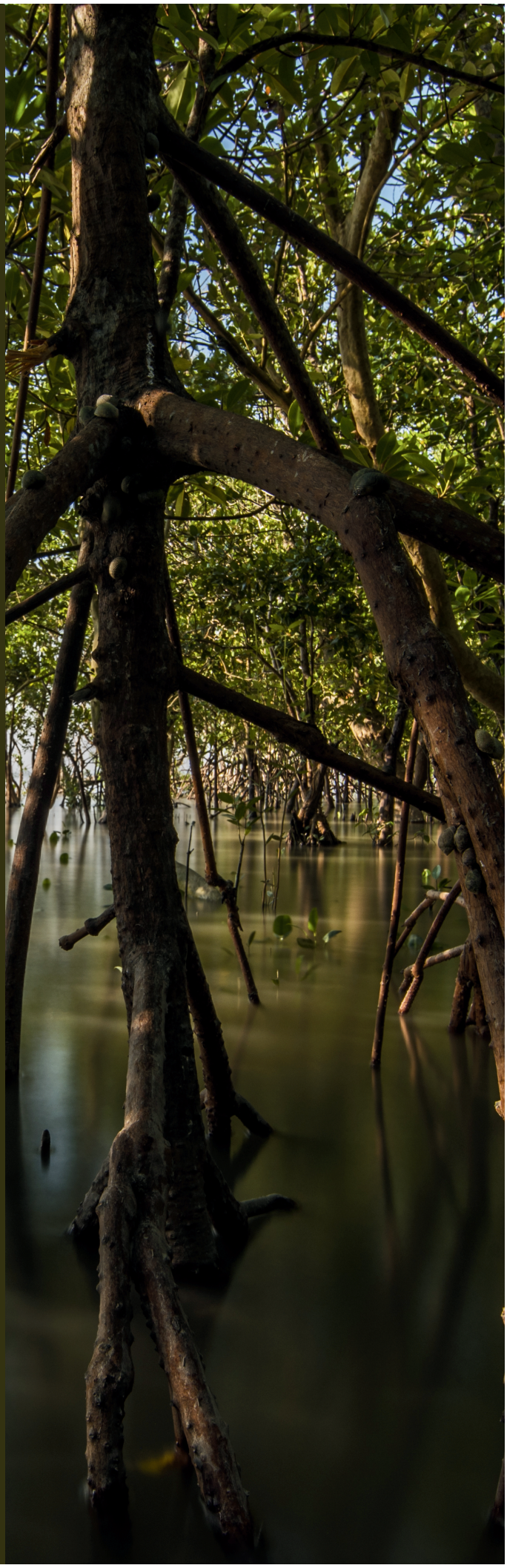
southafrica@ecopdecade.org

https://www.linkedin.com/company/ecop-south-africa/

https://www.instagram.com/ecop_southafrica/

ASIA

- Regional overview
- ECOP China
- ECOP India
- ECOP Japan
- ECOP Korea
- ECOP Sri Lanka
- ECOP Thailand

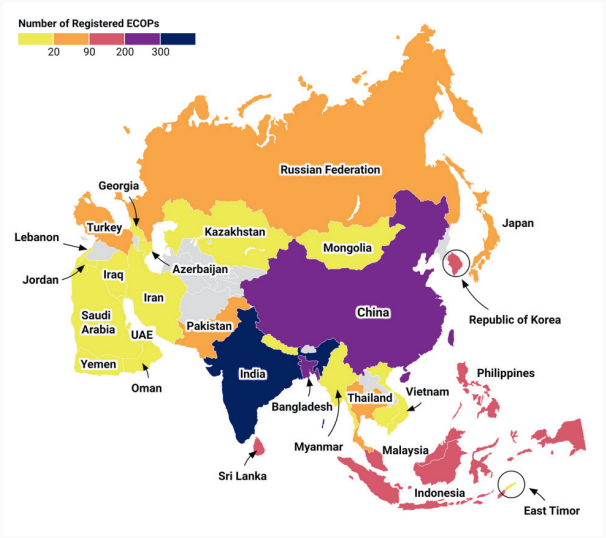


Credits: Santanu Majumdar/Ocean Image Bank

Regional Overview

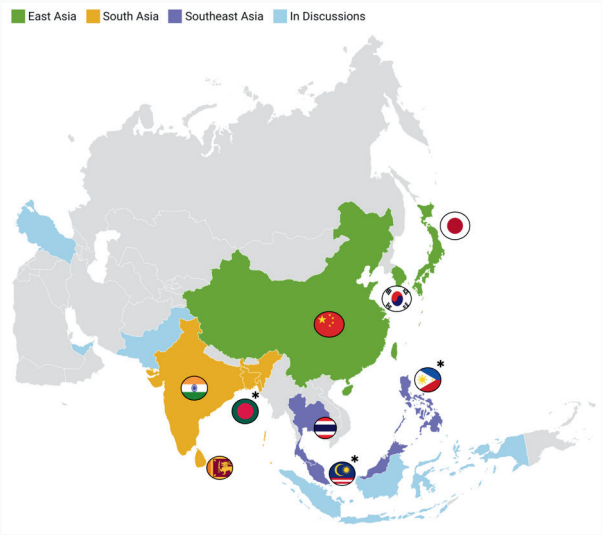
Introduction

Launched in May 2021, the ECOP Asia node aims to connect existing networks of multidisciplinary ECOPs, ocean-related initiatives, and other relevant stakeholders across Asia, while taking stock of the regional UN Ocean Decade landscape. Starting with 23 members across eight countries in late 2021, the ECOP Asia community has grown to over 2,000 members by December 2025, spanning 37 countries. The ECOP Asia team strives to facilitate cross-boundary and cross-sectoral knowledge sharing and the exchange of opportunities, while also providing an inclusive and open platform to strengthen capacity, develop new skills, foster meaningful engagement in the science-policy interface, and understand the challenges and needs of ECOPs across the region.



Geographic distribution of ECOP Asia members, as of December 2025 (N = 2,083). The map was created using Datawrapper.

From 2022 to 2026, ECOP Asia was coordinated by Raphael Roman, who, along with four interns and 25+ national coordinators and regional task team leads, co-led the development of nine national ECOP nodes and two regional working groups dedicated to Ocean Literacy (launched in 2023) and Blue Carbon and Marine Carbon Dioxide Removal (launched in 2025).



Distribution of national ECOP nodes in Asia, including countries where discussions are ongoing. Note: '' indicates nodes with at least one appointed coordinator and some reported activities, but no established governance structure or official webpage. The map was created using Datawrapper.*

Impact

From 2022 to 2026, ECOP Asia was coordinated by Raphael Roman, who, along with four interns and 25+ national coordinators and regional task team leads, co-led the development of nine national ECOP nodes and two regional working groups dedicated to Ocean Literacy (launched in 2023) and Blue Carbon and Marine Carbon Dioxide Removal (launched in 2025).

with recommendations tailored to each national reality. As a strong legacy from ECOP Asia, these knowledge products offer a unique glimpse into national ocean contexts through the valuable and underrepresented lens of ECOPs. Encouragingly, the findings and insights from these surveys have generated ripple effects across the Ocean Decade community. While they inspired other groups to conduct similar needs assessments, they also drew the attention of senior officials and key national scientific institutions in both countries with well-established ECOP networks and those where such networks remain limited, thereby helping to address gaps in regional engagement and outreach.

Two other notable achievements were (1) the successful rollout of the ECOP Asia internship scheme, which recruited four outstanding interns from China, India, Malaysia, and Bangladesh; and (2) the release of a georeferenced ocean stakeholders map for Asia. With over 50 data points, this interactive tool aims to raise visibility of "who is doing what and where" and facilitate access to such information, spanning different sectors and ocean topics.

When reflecting on the diverse portfolio of activities coordinated by the ECOP Asia team over the past 5 years, such as special symposia, workshops, training sessions, webinars, and podcasts, the majority took place at the national level, in collaboration with a particular national node/team.

Two of the most memorable gatherings of Asian ECOPs were:

- The 2nd UN Ocean Decade Regional Conference & 11th WESTPAC International Marine Science Conference in Bangkok, Thailand, 22–26 April 2024, where several members of the ECOP Asia team successfully co-designed two "Decade Action Workshops" focused on ocean literacy and multidisciplinary practices (read our workshop summary);

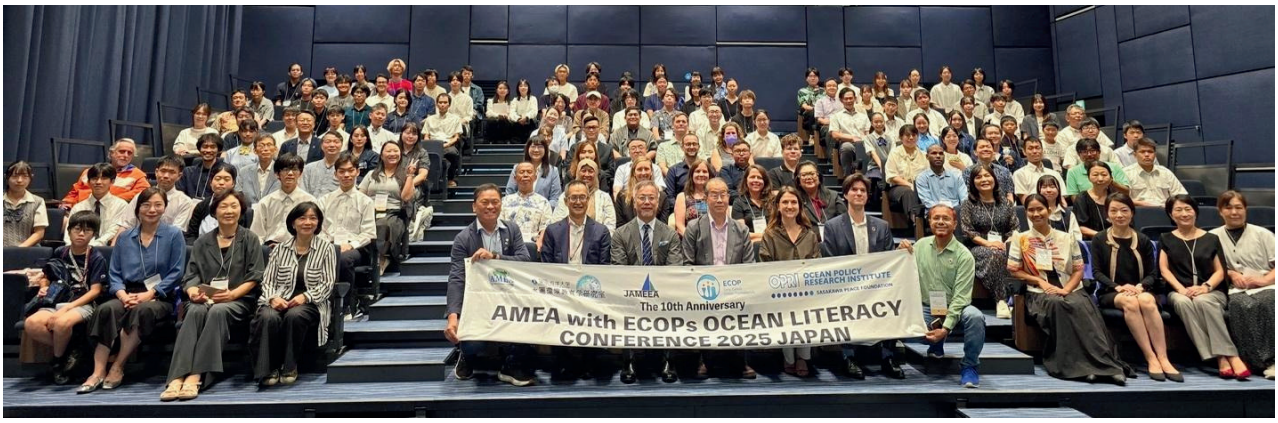
- The "AMEA with ECOPs Ocean Literacy Conference" in Tokyo, Japan, from 4–6 August 2025, which was jointly organized with ECOP Asia node and included introductory remarks by the regional coordinator (see article from the Economist Impact).

Plans ahead

As of April 2026, the ECOP Asia node is transitioning its regional leadership, which may result in a new governance structure and renewed strategic ambitions for the second half of the UN Ocean Decade. That said, the regional node will continue to establish new working groups and national hubs (e.g., in Pakistan, Turkey, and Indonesia), strengthen its existing partnerships, co-develop innovative knowledge products, mobilize financial resources to support capacity development activities and travel support for ECOPs, and increase synergies with the private sector, industry, and government

officials. Several ongoing initiatives include a book on “best practices and emerging voices in ocean literacy”, an ocean literacy and policy workshop to be held in person in Malaysia, and a potential training on AI and machine learning applications in marine science in Bangladesh, among other projects in the pipeline. Importantly, some processes and structures that ECOP Asia has set in motion, whether at the national or regional level, have already demonstrated a capacity for self-sustained operation and resilience, with minimal oversight from the global ECOP team. Additionally, by cultivating existing partnerships, developing external support mechanisms, and nurturing.

Moving forward, we expect more meaningful involvement of Asian ECOPs in the science-policy-society interface and a greater sense of ownership in the UN Ocean Decade Framework. There has been encouraging progress towards enhancing the representation and participation of ECOPs in high-level dialogues and conferences, especially those from underrepresented countries and communities. However, there is still room for improvement, with the next UN Ocean Decade Conference in Rio, Brazil (7–9 April 2027), presenting a unique opportunity to advance efforts in elevating marginalized voices and meaningfully engaging ECOPs across all layers.







Top: *AMEA with ECOPs Ocean Literacy Conference, Tokyo, Japan, 4–6 August 2025.*
Bottom: *Decade Action workshops led by the ECOP Asia team during the 2nd UN Ocean Decade Regional Conference & 11th WESTPAC International Marine Science Conference, Bangkok, Thailand, 22–25 April 2024. Credits: ECOP Asia.*

Communication Channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/asia/

asia@ecopdecade.org



ECOP China

Introduction

ECOP China officially launched during an ECOP workshop in November 2022, aiming to provide a platform for Chinese early-career professionals nationally and internationally. Guided by the overarching objective of supporting the UN Ocean Decade and empowering future ocean leaders, this initiative starts with identifying and understanding the needs of Chinese ECOPs, building a shared understanding of the concept and importance of a harmonious community, and providing them with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed for meaningful engagement.

ECOP China aims to foster a comprehensive community for ECOPs across various sectors, starting but not confined to research networks, encouraging mentorships and interdisciplinary collaborations. The governance structure is composed of a coordination team, executive committee and advisory committee. Guided by senior ocean professionals from the advisory committee, ECOPs and middle-career ocean professionals (MCOPs) can facilitate effective on-the-ground implementation. By linking different career-stage groups and disciplines, ECOP China hopes to enhance the voice and agency of youth in global ocean governance.

Impact

After the ECOP China report was published in 2023, the work undertaken by ECOP China has included community and network building, hosting online webinars to engage more Chinese ECOPs, organizing workshops, and contributing to publications to enhance international cooperation. As of June 2026, ECOP China has nurtured a 400-member online community which regularly shares job opportunities, news and updates on innovation in the marine field. At the ECOP Workshop held during the DITTO (Digital Twins of the Ocean) Summit 2023, the ECOP China node officially announced its establishment.



ECOP China node establishment ceremony at DITTO Summit 2023. Credits: Conference social media team.

At the 7th XMAS, the 2025 Xiamen Symposium on Marine Environmental Sciences, ECOP China organized Session 67, “Advancing Ocean Sustainability: The Role of Early Career Ocean Professionals in Capacity Building, Ocean Literacy and Collaborative Leadership,” which helped raise public awareness of the UN Ocean Decade and further strengthened regional cooperation.



ECOP Programme Workshop at the 7th XMAS. Credits: Shenghui Li.

Since 2025, the node has played a key role in the Blue Wave Conference. The inaugural conference, held in Shenzhen on 30–31 October 2025: “Youth Empowerment for Ocean Science and Action,” brought together over 200 ECOPs from 15 countries and resulted in the launch of the Blue Wave Shenzhen Initiative, which proposed a Global Partnership for Youth Empowerment in Ocean Science and Action outlining 10 priority actions.



Blue Wave Conference 2025: Youth Empowerment for Ocean Science and Action, Shenzhen, China, October 2025.
Credits: Blue Wave Conference 2025.

Building on this, ECOP China is co-designing the second conference, to be held in Xiamen on 6–7 June 2026 under the theme “Youth Leadership for the Unknown Frontiers.” Through these efforts, ECOP China aims to strengthen youth engagement in ocean science and governance and reinforce its role as a bridge between national youth networks and the Ocean Decade framework.

ECOP China co-leads the Ocean Literacy Across Languages (OLAL) project, an endorsed UN Ocean Decade Action under the ECOP Programme. The project addresses language barriers in ocean knowledge systems through a global database of ocean literacy initiatives and a multilingual publication series in Chinese and English. It aims to promote cross-cultural collaboration and

contribute to more inclusive and accessible ocean literacy.

Members of ECOP China contributed to an innovation-focused paper published in the journal The Innovation (DOI: 10.1016/j.xinn.2025.101007). The paper examines how ECOPs can advance innovative, interdisciplinary, and solution-oriented approaches to ocean science and governance within the framework of the UN Ocean Decade. Importantly, it showcases a concrete example of collaboration between the ECOP Programme and the Global Ocean Negative Carbon Emissions (ONCE) Programme, demonstrating how youth-led networks and Ocean Decade Actions can work together to co-produce knowledge and drive transformative ocean solutions.

Plans ahead

In the next years, the ECOP China node aims to undertake on-the-ground work and seek more domestic and international cooperation.

(1) Recruiting ECOP mentors for capacity building activities

There will be around 10 training courses being hosted in China annually to increase the capacity of developing countries. We expect to recruit ECOPs as volunteer mentors to coordinate these training sessions. During the process, there will be cultural exchange activities that can help to build long-term friendships among trainees and ECOP mentors.

(2) Co-organize side events during national and international conferences

Side events and meetings will be co-hosted by ECOP China during major international conferences (e.g., UN Ocean Conference, Our Ocean Conference, International Marine Protected Areas Congress) to raise the visibility of Chinese ECOPs. The Blue Wave Conference will be established as an annual flagship event alternating among Shenzhen, Shanghai and Xiamen, with a potential future host city in Southeast or East Asia. A Blue Wave report after each conference is expected to be published, documenting youth-led recommendations for national and international ocean policy processes.

Communication Channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/china/

china@ecopdecade.org

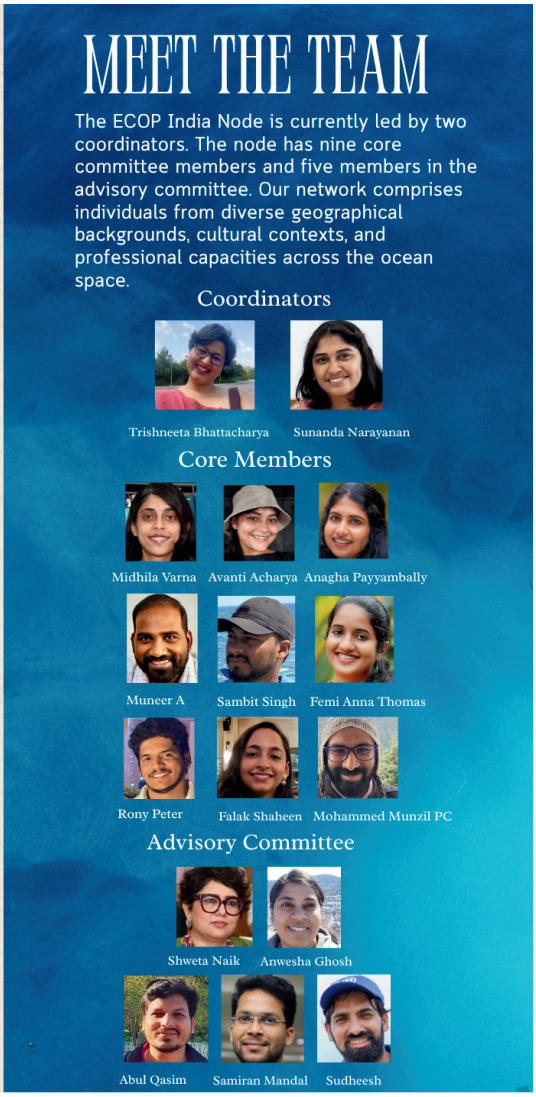
ECOP India

Introduction

The ECOP Programme in India gained popularity among young ocean researchers as early as 2021, largely through their exposure to talks delivered by UNESCO officials at international conferences. In 2021, a small group of researchers got together from a number of oceanographic institutes across India and produced a short video on the occasion of World Ocean Day on how their research contributes to the seven Outcomes of the UN Ocean Decade. That's how the ECOP Programme gained momentum in India. The national ECOP India node was formalized in November 2024. Between 2021 and 2024, a few important national events were organized under the global banner of ECOP and under the leadership of Dr. Sunanda Narayanan and Dr. Trishneeta Bhattacharya (at that time still in their Ph.D), who later on became the coordinators for the ECOP India node.

ECOP India works to spread awareness about the UN Ocean Decade and its sustainability goals, while encouraging collaboration across disciplines. It brings together researchers, entrepreneurs, coastal communities, and the public to understand their perspectives and help shape policies that better serve the Indian Ocean region.

- Coordinators: Trishneeta Bhattacharya and Sunanda Narayanan.
- Core Committee: Midhila Varna, Avanti Acharya, Anagha Payyambally, Muneer A, Femi Anna Thomas, Rony Peter, Falak Shaheen, Mohammed Munzil P C, and Sambit Singh (who recently stepped down).
- Advisory Committee: Shweta Naik, Anwesha Ghosh, Abul Qasim, Samiran Mandal, and Sudheesh.



ECOP Programme India node coordinators, core and advisory committees.
Credits: ECOP India.

Impact

- **Video interviews of early-career researchers** showcasing how their research can align with the seven Outcomes of the UN Ocean Decade on World Ocean Day (June 2021).

- **2021 art contest on the theme of "What does Ocean mean to you?"** on the occasion of World Ocean Day.

- **Presentation during the ECOP Incubator Session** at the 2021 UN Ocean Decade kickoff conference for the Western Pacific and its Adjacent Areas (WESTPAC). More details available in this summary report (November 2021).

- **IOC-UNESCO OceanPrediction** DCC Launch Event (January 2023).

- **ECOP Participation at the 8th Biennial Conference of the Ocean Society of India**, OSICON-23. Learn more in this ECOP blog post (August 2023).

- **Ocean Literacy in India Webinar** (ECOP Programme Youtube channel) (October, 2023)

- **National Essay Competition** on the "Power of Collective Community Action for Effective Ocean-based Solutions to Combat Climate Change".

- **National Survey** on "Experience of ECOPs in Collaborative Ocean Science in the Indian Ocean Region".

- **National Workshop** on "The ECOP Initiative: Connecting, Learning, and Leading in Ocean Science" organized in collaboration with the DCC-IOR, Hyderabad. 5–6 June 2024.

Upcoming activities

- **UN Ocean Decade Activity:** C-TIDe (Cultivating Tomorrow's Innovators Decade) India, from March 2026 to March 2027.

- **Ocean awareness month** from June 1 to June 30, 2026, across schools/colleges in India. 31 people have volunteered for this campaign.



ECOP session at OSICON 2023, bringing together ECOPs to exchange ideas, share experiences, and strengthen collaborative networks. Credits: INCOIS.



First National ECOP workshop, organised in association with DCC-IOR. Credits: INCOIS.

- **2nd ECOP India National Workshop** in association with DCC-IOR.

Plans ahead

ECOP India envisions building a truly accessible and inclusive ocean science network that recognises and bridges India's vast regional diversity. At its heart, ECOP India seeks to forge meaningful partnerships with policymakers, coastal communities, and youth organisations working at the frontlines of ocean sustainability, ensuring that scientific knowledge does not remain confined to research institutions but instead travels to the people and places that need it most. By connecting early career ocean professionals across the country and channeling their expertise into policy conversations, ECOP India aims to make ocean governance more grounded, more equitable, and more responsive to the lived realities of India's coastal citizens.

Communication Channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/india/

india@ecopdecade.org

https://www.linkedin.com/in/ecop-india-598a223a8/

https://www.instagram.com/ecopsindia/

https://www.facebook.com/ecop.india.2025/

https://x.com/EcopIndia_node

https://www.youtube.com/@ecopsindia5668

ECOP Japan

Introduction

Surrounded by the ocean from all sides and home to a diverse marine environment from the North to the South, Japan has built its history alongside the ocean, with various stakeholders living in harmony with it over the generations. Against this backdrop, Japan Node was started in January 2022, on the occasion of the ECOP Japan Symposium "Toward creating ECOP network in UN Decade of Ocean Science" as a kick-off event. The mission of the Japan Node is to facilitate and expand the network of ECOPs based in Japan across fields and disciplines, which are often hindered by sectoral silos. Japan Node's action includes disseminating useful information and opportunities, conveying ECOP's voice via events, and providing a platform for multidisciplinary interaction. Through those activities, Japan Node also aims to provide diverse career paths in the ocean space to the next generation.

As of March 2026, Japan Node is steered by three coordinators – Kotaro Tanaka, Hana Matsubara and Kohei Hamamoto, with the generous support of ocean-relevant organizations in Japan, including the Ocean Policy Research Institute of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, the Japan Society of Ocean Policy and the Nippon Foundation.

Impact

Thanks to the collaboration of enthusiastic ECOPs and partners, the ECOP Japan Node has accomplished various activities, including two symposiums in 2022 and 2024, a poster envisioning ECOP Japan's aspiration, the ECOP Japan Survey Report, video letters from ECOPs, and organizing hands-on side events at an international conference.





Side events organized by the ECOP Programme Japan Node at the 2025 PICES Annual Meeting in Yokohama, Japan. Credits: ECOP Japan.

The ECOP Japan Node is now willing to activate communication through its social channels, particularly the ECOP Japan Radio Podcast, to amplify the fresh voices of ECOPs.

What always encourages the coordinators is, among others, how the ocean science community in Japan is keen on and looking for ways of supporting ECOPs. ECOP Japan's role is critical here – a catalyst to convey the diverse voice of ECOPs and to provide charts of intergenerational collaboration for the science-policy-society interface.

Plans ahead

Aiming at strengthening its capacity, ECOP Japan opened a call for coordinators and supporters who are willing to support the coordination team. The expected roles include co-coordinator, social media manager, podcast manager, and domestic and international partnership manager. Recognizing the limited human resources under the voluntary nature as a big challenge, the ECOP Japan Node is looking forward to collaborating with many enthusiastic and like-minded ECOPs to proceed in a pragmatic way. Towards 2030, ECOP Japan will explore opportunities for dialogue with other national nodes to exchange good practice, in parallel with expanding the "network of networks" in Japan. Legacy after 2030 is another pivot of discussion – the network should sustain through the generational shift.

Communication Channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/japan/

japan@ecopdecade.org

https://www.instagram.com/ecopjapan/

https://x.com/EcopJapan

Podcast (ECOP Japan Radio): https://open.spotify.com/show/5z5VXgbqbqY2z6DJDplftY



ECOP Korea

Introduction

K-ECOP officially began its organized activities with its first general meeting on August 22, 2022. The node was established to address the fragmentation of early-career researchers and professionals in South Korea. Its primary mission is to identify the demographics of young ocean professionals, create an integrated human network, and provide a platform for sharing critical information regarding employment, academic conferences, and individual research promotion.

By fostering a collaborative environment, K-ECOP aims to establish a foundation for joint research networks that would otherwise remain inaccessible to isolated early-career professionals. In addition, it promotes the sharing of job opportunities and research activities, and encourages active ECOP participation within the academic community.

The node is led by a coordination team that has expanded over time. Key personnel include:

- **Lead Coordinator:** Jae-Hyoung Park (Pukyong National University).
- **Coordination/Preparatory Committee:** Hyung-Gyu Lim (Chonnam National University), Minkyoung Kim (Kyungpook National University), Seung-Tae Yoon (Kyungpook National University), Chanhyung Jeon (Pusan National University), and Bumsoo Kim (NASA).
- **Main Partners:** The Korean Society of Oceanography (KSO), the Korea Institute of Ocean Science & Technology (KIOST), and the Korea Institute of Marine Science & Technology Promotion (KIMST).

Impact

K-ECOP has successfully integrated itself into the domestic and international ocean science community through the following achievements:

- **UN Ocean Decade Endorsement (March 2025)**: The "Korean Network of Oceanic Teams" (KNOT) (Action No. 58.7) was officially endorsed as a project under the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, specifically attached to the global ECOP Programme.
- **Academic Integration:** K-ECOP has maintained a consistent presence at the Korean Society of Oceanography (KSO) Spring and Fall meetings. This includes specialized sessions, "Dissertation Symposia" for recent graduates, and the implementation of "ECOP Tables" to facilitate on-site networking.

- **Mentorship Programs**: Implementation of mentor-mentee sessions during major conferences to connect early-career professionals with senior scientists.

- **Digital Infrastructure**: Establishment of the official K-ECOP webpage under the global ECOP Programme platform and the launch of a newsletter to share research trends and job opportunities.

- **Education and societal engagement**: Engaging in educational and outreach activities, including Ocean Science Big Data Contest since 2022 and participation in policy-related forums such as the 2025 Ocean Science Road Forum at the Korea National Ocean Science Museum.

Plans ahead

- **Educational Outreach and Capacity Building:** Acting as a bridge between oceanographers and educational institutions (elementary, middle, high schools, and universities), while contributing to outreach efforts through a pool of marine experts, promoting ocean literacy, and disseminating ocean science knowledge.

- **Interdisciplinary Expansion**: Promoting and expanding ECOP activities across diverse ocean-related disciplines, encouraging participation, and supporting the initiation of new ECOP-driven activities in these fields.

- **Policy Engagement:** Raising awareness among policymakers and strengthening the role of ECOPs in science-policy interfaces.

- **Research Leadership:** Developing and supporting ECOP-led research projects, particularly those addressing emerging and challenging topics in ocean science.

Communication Channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/south-korea/

ko.ecop.staff@gmail.com



ECOP Sri Lanka

Introduction

The ECOP Sri Lanka Node is a newly established and growing network, formally initiated on 23 August 2025 during Oceanswell's Ocean Explorers Festival. The idea emerged when a small group of like-minded ECOPs came together after the 2025 UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France, and reached out to the regional coordinator to begin forming a national node. Although several individuals from Sri Lanka had already been part of the global ECOP Programme prior to this, the establishment of the national node marked an important step in bringing these members together, while also creating space for new participants to join and engage. Following the launch, an initial meeting was convened to connect both existing and new members. This provided an opportunity to collaboratively shape the national vision, begin developing a shared strategy, and identify a core team to guide the node's activities moving forward.

Vision & Mission

Our vision is to cultivate a thriving community of ECOPs in Sri Lanka, dedicated to advancing marine research, protecting our ocean ecosystems, empowering coastal communities, and promoting sustainable ocean use for future generations. ECOP Sri Lanka, in alignment with the vision of the UN Ocean Decade, aims to:

- Empower and connect ECOPs through collaboration, mentorship and knowledge-sharing.
- Promote interdisciplinary marine research to support evidence-based conservation and sustainable ocean governance.
- Raise awareness and build capacity within coastal communities to foster ocean stewardship and resilience.
- Strengthen national and international partnerships to enhance opportunities for ECOPs and amplify their impact.
- Advance inclusive, innovative and actionable contributions across science, policy, and practice.

National Coordinators: Lasuni Gule Godage, Udayanga Sampath, Gayathra Bandara, and Dilini Navodya

Core Team

- Communication and Outreach Lead: Himaya Waduge
- Research Coordinate Lead: Manuja Pramodya
- Administration and Logistics Lead: Udani Hewamadduma
- Engagement and Capacity Building Lead: Dapsara Kularathna
- Student ECOP Lead: Imani Herath

- Monitoring and Evaluation Lead: Tharusha Neththipola
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Lead: Sagari Siyambakagoda
- Partnerships and Funding Lead: Anjalika Pathirana

Impact

- **CV Writing and Application Skills Training**

As the first activity of the ECOP Sri Lanka node, we conducted a a specialized training session focused on essential career development skills. These sessions, led by Dr. Asha de Vos, covered crafting strong CVs and writing effective applications. The training took place during the Ocean Explorers Festival, organized by Oceanswell at the National Museum of Natural History, Colombo, on 23 August 2025. Through this initiative, 24 ECOPs strengthened their skills and gained practical guidance to support their career pathways, while also becoming part of the growing ECOP Sri Lanka network.

- **Ocean with David Attenborough Screening**

We have conducted six screenings of “Ocean with David Attenborough” by the legendary conservationist Sir David Attenborough. We started our first two screenings on 12 September 2025, at the Ocean University auditorium, where university students and lecturers were present, and then at Barefoot Garden cafe on October 3 2025, where civil society members and NGOs were present. We subsequently got invited by the British Council Sri Lanka to host three more screenings at their three venues. The total participation of all six screenings exceeded 800 participants, which is a huge milestone for us.





CV writing and application skills training session conducted by ECOP Sri Lanka at Oceanswell’s Ocean Explorers Festival.
Credits: Oceanswell, Sri Lanka.



Screening of Ocean with David Attenborough at the Ocean University of Sri Lanka.
Credits: ‘Ocean Hertz’, the media club of Ocean University, Sri Lanka.

- **ECOP Sri Lanka Monthly Webinar Series**

We started doing monthly webinars in 2026. As of May 2026, we have successfully conducted five webinars. All of the webinars are recorded, and we will upload them in the near future to members who unfortunately couldn't join us online.

Upcoming activities

- **Capacity-building workshops** – Planning to organize skill-based workshops, including a GIS training session in collaboration with a GIS expert.

- **Ocean literacy research** – Conduct research on ocean literacy among national school students, addressing a relatively underexplored area and existing gaps in school curricula, to inform curriculum revisions.

- **University ECOP hubs** – Establishing university-level ECOP hubs across Sri Lanka to strengthen engagement at the local level. Each university team will coordinate activities with the national node, with plans for annual evaluation and recognition of active groups.

- **Network expansion and collaborations** – Exploring collaborations with other national ECOP nodes (e.g., Spain, Canada, USA) for joint research, knowledge exchange, and funding opportunities.

- **Funding and resource mobilization** – Developing a shared system to track funding opportunities and encouraging coordinated efforts to apply for funding to support activities.

Plans ahead

Looking ahead to 2030 and beyond, ECOP Sri Lanka aims to build a connected and active network of ECOPs while contributing to ocean sustainability in Sri Lanka.

Key priorities include strengthening ocean literacy and outreach, particularly through school programmes and awareness initiatives, as well as using creative approaches such as storytelling and short documentaries to highlight local ocean champions. The node also plans to foster collaboration through thematic working groups, regular community activities such as beach clean-ups, and platforms for knowledge sharing. Supporting the professional growth of ECOPs is another focus, including sharing opportunities, providing career guidance, and offering training through workshops and webinars on both technical and interdisciplinary topics.

Through national and international collaborations, ECOP Sri Lanka aims to create an inclusive and supportive platform that connects people, builds capacity, and contributes to addressing ocean challenges in the years ahead.

Communication Channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/sri-lanka/

srilanka@ecopdecade.org

https://www.linkedin.com/company/early-career-ocean-professionals-ecop-sri-lanka/

https://www.instagram.com/ecopsrilanka/

https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61579273631030



ECOP Thailand

Introduction

ECOP Thailand was informally initiated in December 2021 as the "Thailand Young Marine Scientist Network" during the 7th Marine Science Conference hosted by the Marine Science Association of Thailand. Building on this momentum, the node was formally established on 23 April 2024, during the 2nd UN Ocean Decade Regional Conference and the 11th WESTPAC International Marine Science Conference in Bangkok. ECOP Thailand was officially endorsed as a National Node within the global ECOP Programme on 22 July 2025.

Our mission is to bridge generations and sectors by nurturing the next wave of ocean experts. In Thailand, marine science and policy are often fragmented across institutions. We address this by:

- **Integrating fragmented networks:** Connecting early-career researchers who previously worked in silos.
- **Closing the Science-Policy Gap**: Providing a platform for youth voices to influence national marine management.
- **Ocean Literacy:** Translating complex science into accessible knowledge for Thailand's diverse coastal communities.

The node is managed by a multidisciplinary core team. Since 2024, 34 members have contributed, with 27 currently active across six Task Teams:

- **Leadership:** Chawalit Charoenpong (President/Coordinator), Mathinee Yucharoen (Vice President), Khanittha Uthaipan and Narinrut Nimprasert (Secretariat).
- **Task Teams:** Strategic Planning, Finance, Ocean Literacy, Data Analytics, Public Relations, and a Support/Alumni network.
- **Main Partners:** Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR), Marine Science Association of Thailand, IOC-WESTPAC, Greenpeace Thailand, and the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN) Thailand.



A field visit and knowledge exchange activity aboard the Rainbow Warrior, collaborated with Greenpeace Thailand. The activity connected ECOPs, researchers, and civil society through discussions on marine biodiversity, ocean justice, and collaborative ocean science in the Gulf of Thailand.
Credits: ECOP Thailand.

Impact

ECOP Thailand has successfully moved from a network to a recognized contributor in the national and international ocean community.

Main achievements

- **High-Level Side Events:** We are most proud of our significant presence at the 8th National Marine Science Conference (2025), where we hosted the "Sea Solutions Pitch Competition" and the "Next Wave Workshop," directly engaging over 80 ECOPs.

- **Global Contributions:** We represented Thai youth interests in the Venice Declaration on Ocean Literacy (2024) and the CoastPredict/DCC-CR events (2025), ensuring that Southeast Asian perspectives are included in global coastal resilience frameworks.

- **Ongoing Digital Outreach:** Our co-organized "Seminar Series: DD x ECOP" has become a staple for knowledge sharing, with 10 sessions archived on YouTube for long-term access.

We have observed a marked increase in inter-institutional collaboration. Our 2025 national survey (78 respondents) indicated that ECOPs in Thailand now feel more connected to the UN Ocean Decade goals and have a clearer pathway to participate in regional initiatives like IOC-WESTPAC.

Plans ahead

As we look toward the end of the Ocean Decade (2030), ECOP Thailand aims to solidify its role as a permanent bridge between science, policy, and society in the country.

Strategic Goals

- **2026–2027:** Strengthening monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the tangible impact of ECOP contributions on national marine policy.

- **Toward 2030:** We strive to ensure that the "Ocean We Want" is co-designed by those who will inherit it.

- **Leadership Development:** We continue to provide capacity-building opportunities for early-career professionals.

- **Capacity Building:** By scaling up leadership training, we can empower Thai ECOPs to lead international research projects and UN Ocean Decade Actions.

- **Ocean Literacy:** We keep focusing on enhancing public engagement and local communication to foster ocean literacy at all levels.

Call for Action

We invite national and regional organizations to partner with us in co-creating workshops and mentorship programs. We specifically seek collaborations that offer ECOPs "hands-on" experience in policy drafting and community-based resource management.



Communication Channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/thailand/

ecopthailand@gmail.com

https://www.instagram.com/ecop.thailand/

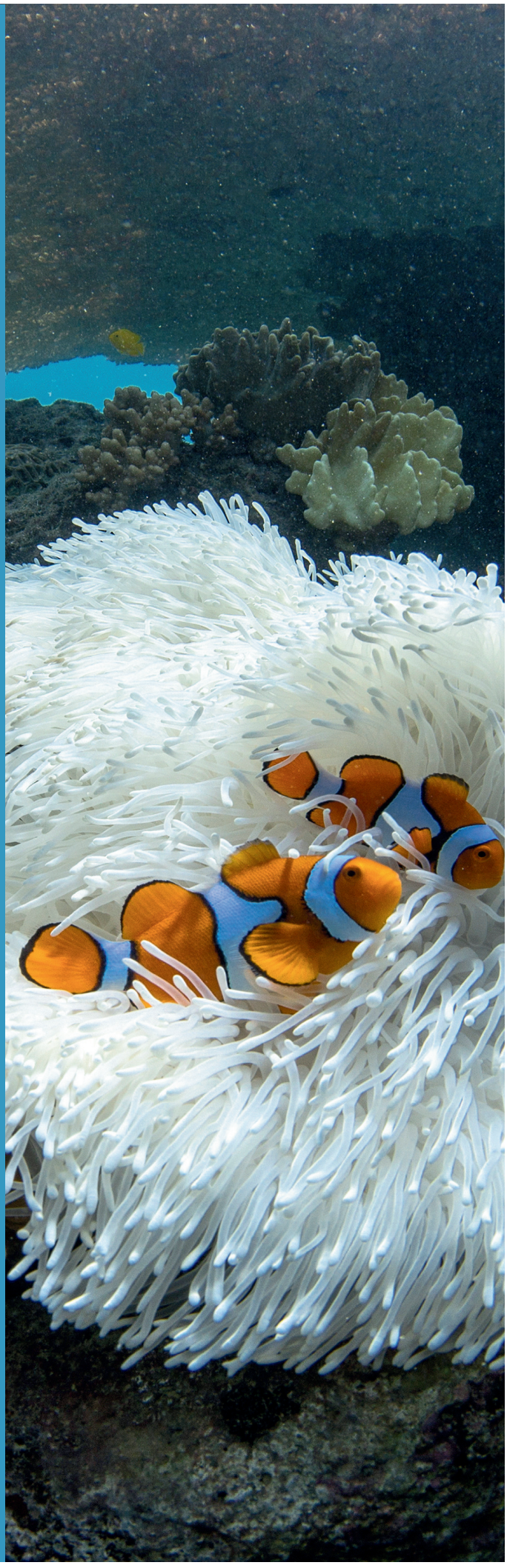
https://www.facebook.com/p/ECOP-Thailand-61568634262178/

https://www.youtube.com/@ECOPthailand2025?app=desktop

@ecopthailand

PACIFIC REGION

- Pacific SIDS Regional Node
- ECOP Australia & New Zealand



Credits: The Ocean Agency/Ocean Image Bank

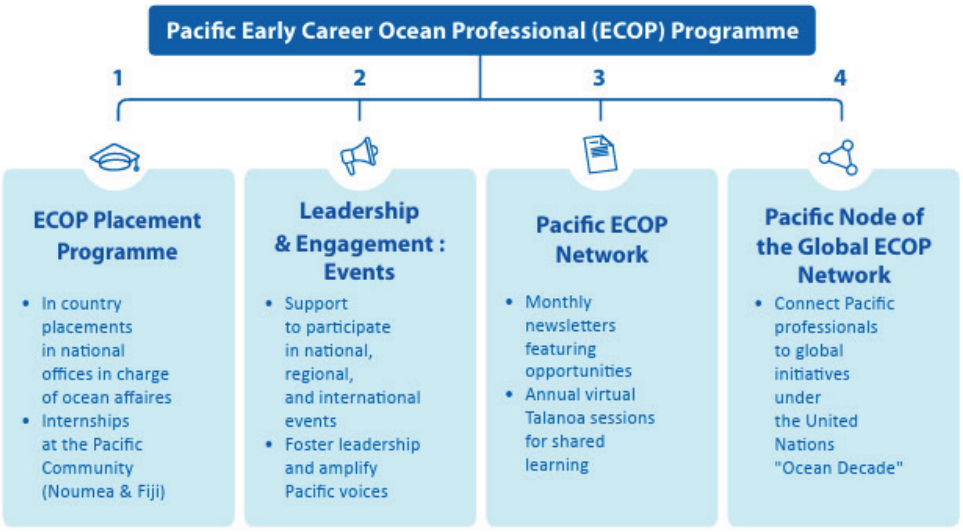
Pacific SIDS Regional Node

Introduction

The ECOP Programme in the Pacific was established in 2021, following the launch of the Global ECOP Programme under the Ocean Decade. It is led by the Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science (PCCOS) at SPC, with the aim of supporting capacity building across 22 Pacific Island countries and territories. The Pacific ECOP Network was confirmed as one of the regional nodes of the global ECOP Programme in April 2024.

It is based on the following components:

- **The Pacific ECOP network**: Launched in June 2021, the Pacific ECOP Network fosters knowledge-sharing and collaboration through annual virtual Talanoa and online training or deep-dive sessions where participants can meet experts.
- **The Pacific ECOP placement programme:** ECOP are placed in national ocean affairs offices or related institutions to support and advance country-specific ocean priorities.
- **Events and hands-on opportunities:** ECOP gains practical experience through participation in regional and international events, scientific cruises, and leadership building activities.
- **The Pacific node of the global ECOP network:** This node connects Pacific ECOP with the global ECOP Programme community under the UN Ocean Decade, amplifying regional voices in global ocean initiatives.



Coordinators

Jerome Aucan – PCCOS Head;
Katy Soapi - Coordinator partnerships and engagement;
Pablo Chavance – PCCOS project manager;
Miriama Vuiyasawa – Senior Programme assistant ECOP;
Maeva Tesan – information and knowledge management officer.

Acknowledgement: Pierre-Yves Charpentier, former PCCOS programme adviser.

Main partners

As part of the "Pacific ECOP Placement Programme" component: NOAA and The Ocean Foundation.

As part "Events and hands-on opportunities" component: Earth Sciences New Zealand; the Japan Fisheries Research and Education Agency; the Nippon Foundation–POGO; CSIRO; and the Ocean Exploration Trust (Nautilus Exploration Program).

Impact

Evidence-Based Understanding of ECOP Needs

An analysis of ECOP survey responses, led by an ECOP, identified key needs of Pacific ECOPs, including knowledge exchange, access to capacity development and career opportunities, Pacific mentorship, and improved ocean science communication. The findings now guide actions, with training, internships, and networking as core priorities.

Capacity Building and Leadership at Regional Conferences

Pacific ECOPs were actively engaged at major regional events, including PICOSOM 2023 (13 ECOPs), the Regional Integrated Ocean Management Workshop 2024 (19 ECOPs), and PIOC 2025 (16 ECOPs alongside students from Solomons Islands National University). ECOPs participated in and led sessions focused on capacity building, including leadership development, media engagement, social media use, and professional networking.

Global Representation and Pacific Voices on the International Stage

Supporting Pacific ECOP representation at high-level global processes has been a key achievement:

- At the UN Ocean Conferences, one ECOP participated in 2022 in Lisbon. At UNOC in Nice in 2025, four ECOPs were selected to represent the Pacific, each from a different subregion (Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia, and European Pacific territories). Each ECOP was guaranteed at least two speaking opportunities, ensuring meaningful participation and visibility of Pacific perspectives.



Pacific ECOP representatives holding the Pacific region map made of tapa during the Unlocking Blue Pacific Prosperity (UBPP) side event at the UN Ocean Conference, Nice, France, June 2025.
Credits: Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA).

- In 2024, an ECOP participated in the UN June Climate Meetings (SB60) and served as the AOSIS oceans coordinator, representing SIDS positions throughout the Oceans and Climate Change Dialogue.

Strengthening Pacific Dialogue and Community

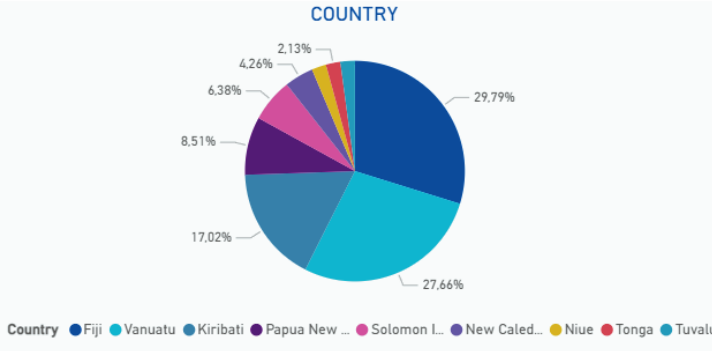
Since 2021, annual ECOP Talanoa Sessions have provided an inclusive, Pacific-led space for dialogue, knowledge exchange, and community building. In 2025, five ECOPs officially participated, representing both placement and network programmes.

Targeted Professional Development Opportunities

Additional capacity-building milestones included ECOP participation in the Waiti Waita Conference (2022), the Marine Spatial Planning Forum (2024), and the Oceania Seabird Symposium, where two ECOPs were selected to attend.

ECOP Placement Programme





PACIFIC - At sea opportunities

In 2022, three ECOPs from two Pacific countries (Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu) joined more than 20 students from the University of the South Pacific for a two-week voyage on the Norwegian tall ship *Statsraad Lehmkuhl* as part of the One Ocean Expedition, a floating ambassador for the UN Ocean Decade.

During the voyage, the ECOPs took part in sail training, ocean science, education and diplomacy, inspiring action for a sustainable ocean.

In 2023, NIWA and SPC, proposed the the Floating University for the Pacific Islands concept, a platform for early-career scientists from Pacific Island nations to explore key issues affecting their countries and communities, initially based on scheduled cruises by the RV *Tangaroa*, NIWA's deep-water research vessel.

In 2024, one ECOP was selected and sponsored to participate in the inaugural voyage of the Floating University onboard the RV *Tangaroa*.

In 2025, the range of science courses has been expanded with new opportunities offered by partners operating in the region. Five ECOPs from four Pacific Island countries and territories (Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Fiji, and New Caledonia) were selected and sponsored to participate in science-at-sea programmes, including the Floating University Voyage onboard RV *Tangaroa*, the *Kaiyo Maru* Cruise on Tuna Ecology, and the PARC Australia cruise.

Ongoing activities

In 2026, the aim is to meet the demand from a growing number of Pacific Island countries and territories for ECOP placement, providing young graduates with their first professional experience in the ocean sector while supporting national ministries with the implementation of their national ocean priorities. The planned placements include 20 ECOP in 10 countries and territories.

The Pacific ECOP programme also continues to facilitate a range of science-at-sea and hands-on learning opportunities, providing ECOP with practical experience and exposure to international research environments. Current and recent opportunities include: Floating University (2026 Voyage), GO-SHIP P15S Cruise (2026), Nautilus Science & Engineering Internship Program (SEIP) 2026, *Kaiyo Maru* Scientific Cruise on Tuna Ecology (2026).

Plans ahead

Looking ahead to the end of the Ocean Decade and beyond, the node aims to scale up impact, strengthen regional leadership, and ensure long-term sustainability of its initiatives. Key priorities include:

Expanding the ECOP placement programme: increase the number of placements and hosting entities across Pacific Island countries and territories, with a focus on long-term employment pathways, in-country capacity building, and alignment with national ocean priorities.

Expanding science-at-sea opportunities: continue partnerships to provide regular access to research cruises and training.

Strengthening regional training and capacity development: develop more structured training programmes in leadership, science communication, policy engagement, and technical ocean skills, including hybrid and locally delivered formats.

Enhancing Pacific representation in global ocean spaces: ensure continued participation of ECOPs in major international events, with a focus on amplifying Pacific voices, knowledge systems, and priorities in global ocean governance.



Pacific ECOP node during the Pacific Islands Ocean Conference, Solomon Islands, 2025.
Credits: Rocío Lower/Bezos Earth Fund.



Pacific ECOP conducting field research in Vanuatu, 2024.
Credits: Government of Vanuatu.



Pacific ECOP conducting coral reef assessments in Vanuatu, 2024.
Credits: Government of Vanuatu.

Communication Channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/pacific-region/

https://www.spc.int/updates/blog/dynamic-story/2025/12/pacific-early-career-ocean-professionals-ecop-programme

https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-pacific-community/

https://www.instagram.com/spc_cps/

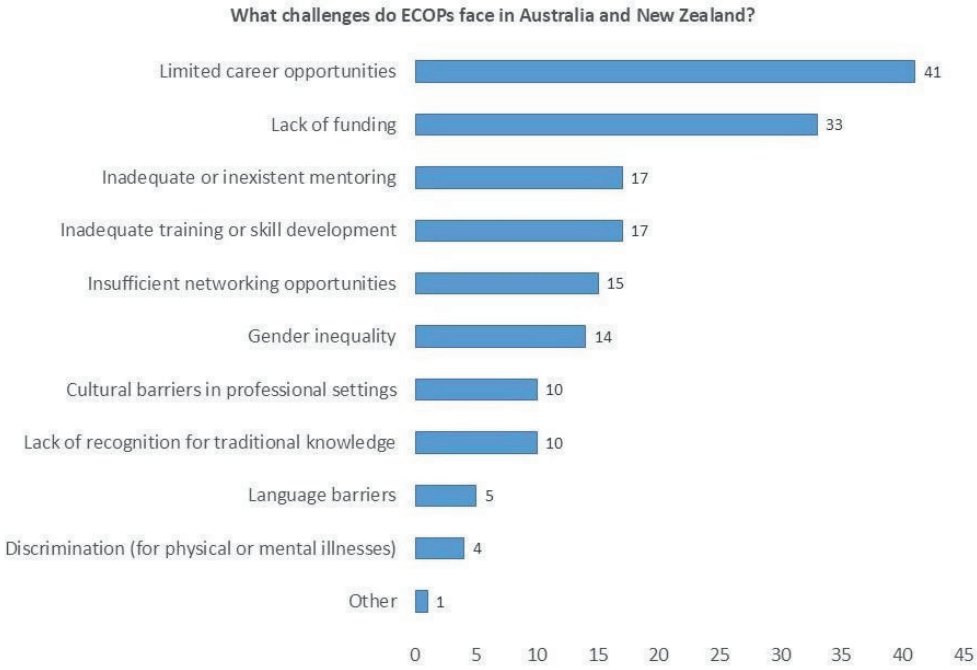
https://x.com/spc_cps

ECOP Australia & New Zealand

Introduction

The ECOP Australia & New Zealand Node was launched with a kick off event on September 17, 2024 during a conference jointly organised by the Australian Marine Sciences Association (AMSA; https://www.amsa.asn.au/) and the New Zealand Marine Sciences Society (NZMSS; https://nzmss.org/) in Hobart, TAS, Australia (15-20 September 2024). The original coordinating team, which stepped down on June 30, 2025, was composed by Emma Church and Rebecca Zitoun. The current coordinating team, which started on July 1, 2025, is led by Rita Franco-Santos with co-coordinators Rosa Maria Cañedo-Apolaya and Danielle Smith.

The Node aims to support the personal and professional development of ECOPs based in or originating from Australia and New Zealand, equipping and empowering them to make the impact they aspire to through avenues such as capacity building, co-creation, and networking. Our initiatives are designed to address challenges faced by our members, with the five main issues according to our 2024-2025 survey being limited career opportunities, lack of funding, inadequate or inexistent mentoring, inadequate training or skill development, and insufficient networking opportunities.

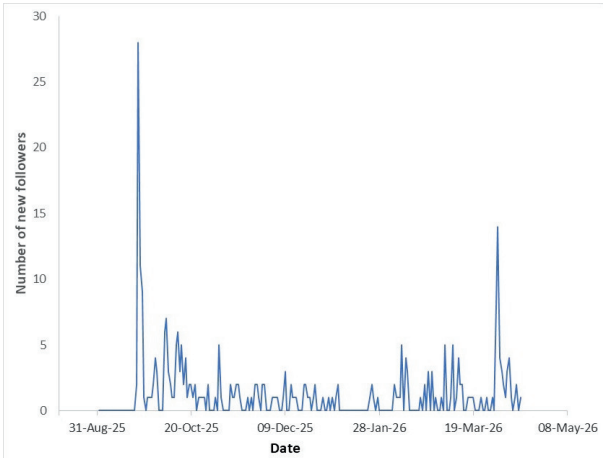


Main challenges faced by ECOPs in Australia and New Zealand according to a survey conducted by the Node between 2024-2025. Total number of participants in the survey: 47. 'Other' challenges included (1 answer each): culture of overwork, isolated from other regions (international networking), and lack of recognition for tasks (admin, peer review, etc) which we must do but that don't count towards research assessment.
Credits: ECOP Australia/New Zealand.

As we design our initiatives, we have been partnering with several individuals and organisations to deliver opportunities for ECOPs in Australia & New Zealand. We expand this list on a monthly basis with our webinar series and for now these partners include scientific societies, government organisations, not-for-profits, universities, and businesses.

Impact

Australia & New Zealand is a relatively young ECOP Programme Node, having been launched less than 2 years ago, but we have been increasing our digital presence (since September 21, 2025) and ramping up our activities.



Number of new followers of the node LinkedIn Page since its launch on 21 September 2025 until 16 April 2026. Data does not include followers who are other Pages, only individual profiles.
Credits: ECOP Australia/New Zealand.

We have been actively promoting the Node and recruiting members (e.g., Franco-Santos et al., 2026a), including during every annual conference hosted by AMSA (jointly with NZMSS in 2024), during which we have organised activities, networking events, and/or training for ECOPs. Our Node has also collaborated with the other ECOP Programme team members to host a town hall at the 2026 Ocean Sciences Meeting in Glasgow, Scotland, where attendees were introduced to the Programme and how they can contribute and benefit from it.

Among the several initiatives we started, we are most proud to have successfully raised funds to fully support 24 ECOPs to take part in a two-day course on Standard Mental Health First Aid (MHFA).

ECOPs who prioritise wellbeing are better equipped to bridge the vital connections between science, policy, and communities, and to ensure that marine research continues to shape a sustainable future for our oceans, but they often experience high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression as job and financial insecurity, extreme competition, lack of support, toxic power dynamics, poor work-life balance, unusual work hours, and high-performance expectations (among others) contribute to poor mental health. The MHFA (www.mhfa.com.au/ourcourses/adultssupportingadults/standardmental-health-first-aid) is an internationally recognised, evidence-based program providing participants with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to recognise the signs and symptoms and to understand mental health problems and crises, thus building the capacity of individuals, workplaces, and communities to

support/respond to anyone experiencing a problem or crisis until professional help arrives or the crisis resolves. We are proud to facilitate the space for these ECOPs to learn more about how to deal with their own mental wellbeing as well as that of others around them, noting that they can be certified as Mental Health First Aiders (valid for 3 years) and use these skills in their workplace as Mental Health Champions (potentially being remunerated for it).

Since July 2025, when the new coordination team started its tenure, the Node has established five ongoing initiatives that directly and indirectly address the ECOP challenges listed above.

Promoting opportunities - we frequently (re)share a variety of local, regional, and international opportunities for ECOPs through our LinkedIn Page, including job advertisements, calls for funding, training offers, competitions, mentorship programs, documents of relevance, leadership opportunities, networking events, upcoming conferences, among others.



Flyer for the Standard Mental Health First Aid course that ECOP Australia & New Zealand will offer, free of charge, to 24 members in August 2026. Credits: ECOP Australia/New Zealand.

Professional development - in March 2026 we started offering a monthly webinar series focused on the development of soft and complementary skills relevant to professionals across diverse career pathways. The first episode addressed scientific publishing and future episodes will address topics such as how to start your own business, how to leverage society membership for professional growth, unique opportunities for career development, collaborations between art and science, eco-anxiety, challenges and opportunities in interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary projects, among others.

Training - we organise a yearly, in-person, course that takes place immediately before the annual AMSA conference; for 2026 we will offer, free of charge, a two-day course on Mental Health First Aid.

Networking - we organise an in-person networking event during the annual AMSA conferences, support members to organise local Chapters for more in-person content and activities (e.g., Western Australia has its own Chapter since January 2025 with frequent in-person meetings and social activities), and try to connect ECOPs with others when attending different conferences.

Championing members - we connect members with the ECOP Programme global communications initiatives to be featured in these campaigns, but we also recently launched our own promotion campaign using our Instagram account to highlight our members and their work and to facilitate interactions between them by increasing their visibility.

As previously mentioned, most of the active work has taken place since September 2025, so it is not yet possible to evaluate its impact in the ECOP community in Australia and New Zealand. We are currently preparing a report for the Node's 2024-2025 survey results, and plan to conduct a brief survey in 2-3 years to assess how effectively the Node is addressing challenges of ECOPs in the region with the implemented activities, and what we need to do better. We do however always encourage feedback and requests from members through specific initiatives, and act on them as soon as possible (e.g., engaging with a member who asked for support in launching a local 'Cinema Club' initiative and investigating member suggestions of topics for webinars).



Promotional material to advertise Episode #2 of the ECOP Australia & New Zealand webinar series, when speakers shared their experiences venturing into the business world. Credits: ECOP Australia/New Zealand.



ECOPs gather during the launch of the Western Australia ECOP Chapter at the Indian Ocean Marine Research Centre, University of Western Australia, on 15 January 2025. Credits: Eric Jorden Raes.

Plans ahead

Our plan moving forward is to continue providing the opportunities we have already launched, potentially enhancing or adapting them as needed to suit the needs of our members, and to establish three more specific initiatives so that the Node has a solid and varied program that addresses challenges of ECOPs in our region. With this set of current and upcoming Node initiatives, we believe the ECOP community in Australia & New Zealand can continue to be empowered until 2030 and beyond and/or until new

challenges arise. Upcoming initiatives include:

(1) A hybrid symposium where all content will be delivered online but with regional (e.g., state capitals) hubs offering attendees the option to gather in-person to watch and network during breaks;

(2) A Task Team on BBNJ-related topics; and

(3) A pilot mentorship initiative to explore how to support career transitions and the development of complementary skills outside academia.



Call for Action

In an effort to make the Node and/or its initiatives financially self-sustainable, we continue seeking partnerships and financial support from various stakeholders. We encourage all organisations with an interest in the future of our oceans and on helping empower the next generation of ocean leaders in Australia and New Zealand to reach out to us to discuss potential collaboration avenues. We organise monthly webinars where you could contribute as a speaker, lending us your wisdom. If you offer training courses in your topic of expertise, we would welcome opportunities to make these available to our members, maybe with a discount or free of charge. We also appreciate introductions to potential funders, as well as contributions from those with experience in fundraising. If you have access to equipment, space, or other resources that could support our initiatives, we would love to borrow them. Financial contributions to strengthen capacity-building initiatives for ECOPs in Australia and New Zealand are also welcomed! If you can think of other ways that you can support us, please reach out to us.

Communication Channels


www.ecopdecade.org/australianewzealand/


australia_newzealand@ecopdecade.org


www.linkedin.com/company/ecop-australia-new-zealand


www.instagram.com/ecop_aus_nz/


https://tinyurl.com/ECOP-AUS-NZ-Playlist

5. TASK TEAMS



Credits: Gregory Piper/Ocean Image Bank

5 Years in Review

Task Teams

6

in total

- Capacity Development
- Deep Ocean
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Ocean Literacy
- OceanBRIDGES
- Private Industry



Credits: Matt Horspool/Ocean Image Bank

Task Teams are international groups working on an overarching topic across many regions. There are six of them: Capacity Development, Deep Ocean, DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion), OceanBRIDGES, Ocean Literacy, and Private Industry. Where there is a need to support regional work on a topic, then a thematic hub is created (for example, Ocean Literacy Asia Hub).

You can find more details about each of them on this page: https://www.ecopdecade.org/task-teams/.

Capacity Development

1. Webinars Hub

Introduction

The Webinars Hub (https://www.ecopdecade.org/webinars/) is one of the four pillars of the ECOP Programme Capacity Development Task Team. The Hub was renamed from the Training and Mentoring Task Team following restructuring in April 2026. The Training and Mentoring Task Team, in turn, was established in the early phase of the ECOP Programme among the first task teams to directly support capacity development of ECOPs in the context of the UN Ocean Decade. Its creation responded to the recognized need for equitable access to knowledge, skills, and professional networks among ECOPs worldwide.

The Webinars Hub builds knowledge, skills, and professional capacity across the ECOP community, organizing free regular webinars on a diverse range of topics reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of ocean science. Central to this mission is the principle of inclusivity, ensuring that ECOPs, regardless of geographical location, sector, or background, can access valuable knowledge to upgrade their skills and connect with international ocean-related organizations from the comfort of their location. These efforts have enabled global accessibility, particularly for ECOPs in underrepresented regions, reinforcing equity in capacity development.

The Hub is currently coordinated by Naomi Krauzig, Anna Spiessens, Jessica Kolbusz, and Amber Eaton, and actively supported by team members Maria Eloá Testoni, Goddey Atitsogbui, Laura Suaza, Lily Hawkes, and Priscilla Peroz. The current team also acknowledges the valuable contributions of former Task Team manager Conor Savage, as well as former deputies Natalia Solís-Miranda and Stephania del Cisne Añazco Rivera, and former members Prerana Gawde, Ben Bluck, Rebecca Bridge, Sambit Sinhg and Sharah Gallego.

The initiative works in close collaboration with:

- ECOP Programme Regional and National Nodes and Task Teams;
- UN Ocean Decade endorsed Programmes, Contributions and Projects and Decade Collaborative Centers;
- Partner organisations across the globe, such as OceanTeacher Global Academy.

Impact

The Webinars Hub has developed a globally accessible space for knowledge transfer and information sharing, with measurable reach and impact:

- 48 Webinars delivered within the ECOP Programme Webinar Series since 2022 as of May 2026, and many more separate national and regional webinars conducted across topics and geographies, in English, Spanish, Portuguese and other languages;
- Over 5,000 registrants globally,
- Broad participation across continents, sectors, and disciplines.



The Hub representatives at global events: EU Ocean Days 2026, Ocean Sciences Meeting 2026, UN Ocean Decade Conference 2024, Ocean Sciences Meeting 2026. Credits: ECOP Programme.

The Webinar Series spans a **diverse thematic portfolio**, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of ocean science and the connection to the Ocean Decade Challenges. Topics include:

- Ocean science and technology (e.g., *underwater acoustics, marine robotics, drones, remote sensing*),
- Data and digital skills (e.g., *ArcGIS, ocean data management, satellite applications*),
- Policy and governance (e.g., *Blue Economy, Ocean Decade frameworks*),
- Career development (e.g., *scientific writing, funding opportunities, NGO development*),
- Sustainability and ecosystems (e.g., *blue carbon, seagrass restoration, plastics pollution*),
- Science communication and outreach (e.g., *SciArt, citizen science, ocean literacy*).



Webinars cover diverse topics, from science communication and art to policy. Credits: ECOP Programme.

The ECOP Programme also contributed to a dedicated Ocean Data webinar series that was running between June 2024 and September 2025 and was co-organized with EUMETSAT, the Copernicus Marine Service (Mercator Ocean International), the European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet), in collaboration with the UN Ocean Decade Coordination Office for Ocean Data Sharing. This series reached over 1,000 participants, significantly strengthening the capacity of ECOPs in ocean data access, management, and application.

Ongoing activities

Current activities include:

- Co-hosted webinars and workshops with international organisations and experts, ensuring a diverse array of content that is important for our audience;
- Logistical and coordination support to webinars led by ECOP Programme nodes (e.g., Togo, Mozambique, Chile, Ecuador), and ECOP Programme Task Teams (e.g., Private Industry, Ocean Literacy);
- Maintenance of the playlist of the recordings of the Programme webinars on our YouTube channel, so they are easily accessible to all at any time: https://tinyurl.com/YouTube-ECOP-Webinars;
- Active outreach and communication efforts to broaden participation in our work.

A key strength of the Hub lies in its collaborative approach, engaging both institutional and grassroots actors. In 2026, particular emphasis is being placed on webinars highlighting endorsed Programmes and Contributions of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, complementing the broader webinar portfolio. This targeted effort aims to increase visibility of officially recognised Ocean Decade Actions while fostering stronger connections between ECOPs and these initiatives.

Reflections

The Webinars Hub demonstrates that low-barrier, digitally accessible knowledge transfer formats can achieve substantial global impact. The high participation rates highlight:

- A strong demand for free and easily accessible information and knowledge;
- The importance of interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral learning;
- The value of international collaboration and knowledge sharing.

Importantly, the Hub has contributed to bridging gaps between science, policy, and society, aligning with the Ocean Decade's vision of actionable ocean knowledge.

Plans ahead

Looking ahead to the remainder of the Ocean Decade, the Webinars Hub aims to:

- Expand the webinar portfolio, including more region-specific and thematic series;
- Deepen collaboration with international organisations, UN Ocean Decade Actions and ECOP Programme Nodes and Task Teams;
- Increase engagement with industry, policy stakeholders, and society.

Full list of ECOP Programme Webinars series Episodes since 2022

1.“How to start an NGO?” (29.09.2022)
2.“The blue economy” (27.10.2022)
3.“The Ocean Decade in Africa” (10.11.2022)
4.“Was 2022 truly the Ocean Super Year we hoped for?” (25.11.2022)
5.“Using ArcGIS software for Oceans-related work: An Overview with Keith Van Graafeiland, from ESRI” (21.12.2022)
6.“Basics of acoustics in underwater applications with Suleman Mazhar from IEEE OES” (29.05.2023)
7.“Funding, opportunities, tips and challenges for ECOPs” (30.06.2023)
8.“Emerging ocean technologies supporting polar science for the next decade” (28.08.2023)
9.“Plastics in the Pacific and on Hawaii with the ECOP Programme Endorsed Project STORAGE” (30.08.2023)
10.“Exploring Ocean Literacy in India with ECOPs and organizations” (02.10.2023)
11.“Stoked about Ocean Science with Citizens of Surf” (12.12.2023)
12.“The Use of Drones in Marine Science” (19.12.2023)
13. “Experiencia Erasmus Mundus – MER + & Global Ocean Carbon Uptake (in Spanish)” (18.02.2024)
14.“Seagrass conservation and restoration in West Africa” (27.02.2024)
15.“Programa de la Red Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOP)” (22.03.2024)
16.“Unlocking Ocean Insights: Innovative Low-Cost Technologies for Marine Ecosystem Study” (14.06.2024)
17.“Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries through the lens of Enhancing Sovereignty & Equitable Access to Market Opportunities” (25.09.2024)
18. “Shaping the future of Ocean Prediction” (06.03.2025)
19. “Trash to Treasure: Repurposing Marine Debris for a Healthier Ocean” (10.04.2025)
20. “How to engage ECOPs in global knowledge-policy-society interfaces?” (16.04.2025)
21. “Capacity Development Opportunities for ECOPs with POGO and SCOR” (23.04.2025)
22. “Data Management Workshop “ (30.04.2025)
23. “Development opportunities for ECOPs with the Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography (ASLO)” (07.05.2025)
24. “Ocean Adventures for Citizen Scientists” (15.05.2025)
25. “Navigating Opportunities: The Sustainable Blue Economy for ECOPs and youth in Canada” (28.05.2025)
26. “The Brilliant Blue Challenge” (11.06.2025)
27. “Creative approaches to Science Communication” (10.07.2025)
28. “Spotlight on action: the practice of protecting and restoring blue carbon ecosystems” (25.07.2025)
29. “Insights into Scientific Writing for Early Career Scientists, ECOPs and students” (29.07.2025)
30. “Making the Invisible Visible: Tracking Biodiversity Protection and Oil Pollution from Space” (09.10.2025)

31. “Bridging science with societal needs through public products” (16.10.2025)
32. “Ocean Decade: Call for Actions and Ocean Connector” (05.11.2025)
33. “Creative Science Communication Workshop II: Turning Your Ideas into Real SciArt Projects” (13.11.2025)
34. “Demystify the Blue Economy: Trends, Pathways, and Opportunities” (19.12.2025)
35. “Robotics and Workforce in Marine Science” (22.01.2026)
36. “Engaging science, policy and art in the Ocean Decade” (06.02.2026)
37. “Building a global science community through summer schools in West Africa, East Africa, and beyond” (12.02.2026)
38. “We are Ocean: The Planetary Organism” (17.03.2026)
39. “Sailing for change and the UN Ocean Decade” (24.03.2026)
40. “Presentation of the International Platform for Ocean Sustainability (IPOS), ongoing projects, and future opportunities for ECOPs” (26.03.2026)
41. “Supporting coastal MPA monitoring with accessible technology” (01.04.2026)
42. “Citizens of Surf: Change in the Lineup” (15.04.2026)
43. “Crowdsourced Research with Zooniverse: Unlocking your Data and Engaging the Public in your Research” (20.04.2026)
44. “Ocean Careers: From First Steps to Finding Your Path” (28.04.2025)
45. “Microplastic Transport from Wastewater Treatment Plants - Where do they go?” (04.05.2026)
46. “The Ocean is our Future” (07.05.2026)
47. “Careers, Skills, and Opportunities: IMarEST’s Role in the UN Ocean Decade” (15.05.2026)
48. “Empowering ECOPs in Ocean Sustainability: Perspectives from the Global Estuaries Monitoring Programme” (21.05.2026)

Call for Action

The Hub welcomes organizations and individual speakers to share their work with our audience and invites them to fill in this form: https://tinyurl.com/ECOP-webinar-form to express interest in presenting at our webinars.

Communication channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/webinars

webinars@ecopdecade.org

https://tinyurl.com/YouTube-ECOP-Webinars

Capacity Development

2. BlueCaD

Introduction

The Blue Capacity Development (BlueCaD) project builds skills for ECOPs in ocean data generation, management, and communication. Through targeted training, the project supports science-based decision-making and sustainable ocean development. The project contributes directly to UN Ocean Decade Challenges 7, 9, and 10 by strengthening capacity, knowledge, and ocean observation systems. BlueCaD focuses on inclusivity by engaging ECOPs from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds, helping reduce barriers and foster innovation across ocean regions.

Key objectives:

1. Deliver short courses on data collection, management, and science communication (online and in-person);
2. Provide hands-on shipboard training in ocean observation and data practices.

Activities of the project focus on delivering blended technical training in Remote Sensing, GIS, R, Python, and Ocean Data View in collaboration with our partners. Training is grounded in oceanographic (physical, chemical, and biological) and ecological datasets, including fisheries, enabling participants to apply skills in relevant contexts. Courses equip ECOPs with practical competencies in data processing and management aligned with FAIR principles, as well as visualization using open-source tools. Participants also develop skills in scientific writing and science communication, with guidance on presenting their work to policymakers, industries, communities, and the public through reports, policy briefs, and visual materials such as infographics.

The BlueCaD Project is coordinated by Gabriel Akoko Juma, Anabel von Jackowski, Eva Rohlfer, and Rhea Thoppil. The Project main partners are OceanTeacher Global Academy and the Decade Coordination Office (DCO) for Ocean Data Sharing (ODS).

Impact

Main achievements

The BlueCaD project has co-organized the following trainings since 2022:

- **Ocean Colour Remote Sensing and Data Analysis** (for ECOPs in Africa, online, 6-25 June 2022);
- **Data Management and Analysis with R Programming** (for ECOPs in Africa, online, 6-24 February 2023);
- **Ocean Data Analysis with R Programming** for Early Career Ocean Professionals (for ECOPs

in Asia, online, 9-31 October 2023);

- **Data Analysis with Python Programming** for Early Career Ocean Professionals (for ECOPs in Central America, in Spanish, online, 26 February – 19 March 2024);

- **Introduction to Oceanographic Survey Techniques and Data Management** (for ECOPs from the Mediterranean region, blended course (online and afterwards onsite in Malta), 10-16 November 2024);

- **Introduction to Ecological Survey Techniques and Data Management** – during the Coastal Ocean Environment School in Western Indian Ocean (COES-WIO) (in-person, 21-27 September, 2025, Mombasa, Kenya).

The corresponding reports are available on the webpage of the BlueCaD Project: https://www.ecopdecade.org/bluecadproject/.

Beyond training, BlueCaD supports knowledge sharing and outreach through additional initiatives. These include the GenSea podcast, which highlights perspectives and experiences from the ocean community, and the development of practical "recipes" via GitBook to provide accessible, step-by-step guidance on tools and workflows introduced in the courses.

The Project is also actively represented at international conferences and events, where team members contribute to discussions on capacity development, ocean data, and the role of ECOPs in the UN Ocean Decade. Through presentations, panel discussions, and participation in global forums such as the UN Ocean Decade Conference and the UN Ocean Conference, BlueCaD helps shape dialogue, share experiences, and strengthen collaboration across the ocean community.

Communication Channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/bluecadproject/

bluecadproject@ecopdecade.org

Capacity Development

3. ECOP Central America Capacity Development Hub

Introduction

The Capacity Development (CD) Hub of the ECOP Central America node centralizes ECOP Programme capacity development efforts in Central America, enabling co-design, sharing, and collaboration through seminars, training sessions, and mentoring. This initiative enables Central American ECOPs to access information and knowledge, helping overcome national, regional, and global barriers, fostering language inclusion in the co-creation of initiatives.

The Hub provides capacity, skills, and knowledge for enhanced ocean observation, policy, and conservation. Closely aligned with the overall objectives of our ECOP Central America Node, this Hub aims to provide capacity-building opportunities in the region. Overall, it aims to unify and promote cross-collaboration in Central America, making information accessible for all, and supporting ECOPs in the area to elevate their representation and inclusion as we move across the Ocean Decade. The Hub is coordinated by Andrea Herrera.

Focus Areas of the Hub:

1. Development of seminars on key themes relevant to the Central America region and ECOPs;

2. Online or in-person training courses/modules in Ocean Science, Ocean Literacy, Ocean Policy and Equity, and Science Communication;

3. Participation and/or organization of various events and symposia showcasing current topics of high interest in Central America and globally;

4. Tailored mentoring programs that support and strengthen ECOPs' capacity building.

Impact

- **Mes Azul** was a series of eight thematic masterclasses held over 4 weeks in January-February 2026 with experts from across Latin America, organized by Academia del Océano and ECOP Central America. Its goal was to democratize access to ocean and climate knowledge in the region, offering open, high-quality content with an educational, scientific, and social focus.

- **First coastal-marine symposia** were co-organized in Honduras and El Salvador in 2024. These events brought together ECOPs, researchers, students, and local stakeholders to share research, foster collaboration, and raise awareness on marine



Participants of the OTGA Python course during the life session in Module 1 in 2024. Credits: ECOP Central America.

conservation and sustainable use of coastal resources. (Further details are available in the Central American section of this report.)

- **A specialized Python programming course** was organized in collaboration with OceanTeacher Global Academy between February 26 and March 19, 2024, equipping ECOPs in Central America with essential skills to manage, analyze, and visualize oceanographic data for marine research. This course introduced learners to the Python programming language and software environment.

Call for Action

The Hub invites regional and international organizations to partner with us to co-organize and co-deliver seminars, training courses, events and mentoring programs for ECOPs in Central America. The Hub welcomes regional NGOs, governmental institutions, the school system, and the local community to collaborate on expanding knowledge for initiatives that help reduce barriers among different groups. Support can take many forms: co-organizing activities, providing access to platforms and mentors, donating materials, or offering economic support.

Communication channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/capacity-development-hub-central-america/

capacity.development_centralam@ecopdecade.org

Capacity Development

4. ECOP Africa Capacity Development Hub

Introduction

The ECOP Africa Capacity Development (CD) Hub is a regional initiative, dedicated to building the scientific, technical, and entrepreneurial capacity of early career ocean professionals across the African continent. Established under the ECOP Africa Node and coordinated by Sarah Viana, the Hub was formally activated in April 2026 with the appointment of two Co-Coordinators: Elizabeth Okullow (Kenya) and Lawrence Dogli (Ghana).

Africa is home to 38 coastal and island states and some of the world's most biodiverse and economically significant marine ecosystems. Yet early career ocean professionals on the continent consistently face a critical gap: strong theoretical foundations paired with limited access to practical, hands-on training, professional networks, and structured pathways into the blue economy. The CD Hub was established to address this gap systematically.

The Hub's programming is organised across five thematic areas, identified through a consultative process drawing on member needs surveys and alignment with the UN Ocean Decade's priority challenges:

- **Climate Change Adaptation:** building capacity to understand, monitor, and respond to climate-driven changes in marine and coastal systems.
- **Blue Economy:** strengthening knowledge and skills in sustainable ocean-based economic sectors, with a focus on African contexts.
- **Ocean Innovation and Entrepreneurship:** supporting ECOPs to develop entrepreneurial mindsets and innovation skills for the ocean sector.
- **Marine Biodiversity and Conservation:** building technical and scientific capacity in biodiversity assessment, conservation planning, and ecosystem monitoring.
- **Marine Technology:** equipping ECOPs with skills in ocean observation technologies, data collection and management, and digital tools for ocean science.

Programming is delivered through four complementary activity streams: in-person practical workshops, an annual four-webinar series, a structured internship programme, and a mentoring initiative currently under development.

The first Hub's activity that is being currently conceptualized would be an in-person, hands-on workshop on DNA Barcoding for Biodiversity

Assessment, developed in partnership with the South African National Research Foundation (NRF), the Norwegian Institute of Blue Economy Research, and the FAO EAF-Nansen Programme, with technical design led by Dr. Maduna. The workshop would host 12 to 15 early career professionals from across Africa, selected through an open call, with logistics supported by the UN Ocean Decade Capacity Development Facility.

This workshop reflects the Hub's core philosophy: quality over scale. Smaller, well-designed practical interventions deliver deeper impact than high-volume, low-engagement activities. If successful, the DNA Barcoding workshop is intended to become an annual programme, providing a replicable template for future in-person training across the Hub's thematic areas.

Call for Action

The Hub operates through a strategic partnership model, bringing together committed partners including the Kelp Forest Foundation, Gulf of Guinea Maritime Institute, Mohammed VI Polytechnic University Foundation for Environmental Protection, Ocean Teacher Global Academy (UNESCO/IOC), International Ocean Institute Southern Africa, Revamp Rave Network, and the WIO-Early Career Science Network, among others. The Hub is also in active engagement with the UN Ocean Decade Capacity Development Facility for logistics and funding support.



Communication Channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/africa

capacity.development_africa@ecopdecade.org

Deep Ocean

Introduction

The Deep Ocean Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOP) Task Team was established in May 2025 as part of ongoing efforts under the UN Ocean Decade to strengthen collaboration and capacity development within the deep-ocean community.

The Task Team aims to provide a dedicated space for ECOPs working in the deep-ocean domain to connect, collaborate, and exchange skills. It fosters networking and knowledge-sharing across a globally distributed community of researchers and practitioners. A core objective of the group is to strengthen links between ECOPs and UN Ocean Decade Actions with a 'deep' focus, facilitating engagement with these initiatives and supporting the integration of early career perspectives into global deep-ocean efforts.

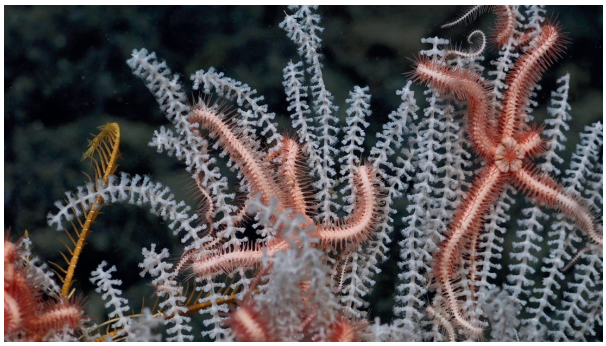
The coordinating team comprises Amelia Bridges (UAE), Leslie Smith (USA), Julie Christopher (USA), Elizabeth Hetherington (USA), Olusola Adeoye (Nigeria), Angelee Annasawmy (France), and Paige Maroni (Australia).

The Task Team works closely with the Deep Ocean Observing Strategy (DOOS), from which it originated. The group grew out of the DOERs programme, developed under an NSF AccelNet grant, providing a strong foundational network for its activities and continued development.

Impact

As a newly established initiative, the Task Team's early achievements centre on building a cohesive and active community. A key milestone has been the establishment of a quarterly seminar series, providing a regular platform for professional development and community engagement. Two seminars have currently been held, each with multiple sessions to span across time zones. Sessions in 2026 focus on providing a place for Deep ECOPs to connect with others, training on strategy versus planning and a co-hosted session with the Deep Ocean Stewardship Initiative (DOSI) on writing policy briefs.

Ongoing activities include the continued delivery of the seminar series, complemented by responsive, ad-hoc sessions designed to meet emerging community needs. These have included preparation sessions to support ECOPs presenting at major conferences such as the Ocean Sciences Meeting (OSM), helping to build confidence and visibility among early career researchers.



Crinoids on a deep-sea coral. Image credit: Schmidt Ocean Institute (2023). ROV SuBastian, Imagery provided by Schmidt Ocean Institute from expedition FKt231202, dive S0622, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

Reflecting on the work to date, one of the main challenges has been coordinating activities across a globally distributed, non-regional community, particularly with respect to time zones. However, a key strength has been the existence of a strong foundational network through the DOERs programme, which has significantly facilitated community building and engagement.

Plans ahead

Looking ahead to the remainder of the Ocean Decade, the Task Team aims to continue expanding and strengthening the Deep Ocean ECOP network. A central priority is to further enhance connections between ECOPs and UN Ocean Decade Actions, ensuring that early career professionals are aware of and can actively contribute to ongoing initiatives.

The Task Team will continue to develop its seminar series and responsive programming, with a focus on supporting professional development, fostering collaboration, and addressing the evolving needs of the community.

Call for Action

The Task Team welcomes new members and encourages ECOPs working in or interested in the deep ocean to join the network. It also invites UN Ocean Decade Programmes with a 'deep' focus and related initiatives to share their needs and opportunities, enabling the Task Team to connect these with the Deep ECOP community and support meaningful engagement.



Communication Channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/deep-ocean/

deepocean@ecopdecade.org

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Introduction

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Team (DEI TT) was initiated in 2020 and more formally established in 2021. It emerged from a group of Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs) who shared common interests and concerns across the ECOP Programme, the Ocean Best Practices System (OBPS), and the Empowering Women for the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science Programme.

The core aim of the Task Team is to embed diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within ocean science, governance, and the broader workforce, recognizing these principles as fundamental to a just and sustainable society. Embracing diverse perspectives, experiences, and skill sets enhances innovation, fosters creativity, and supports the development of novel solutions to complex global ocean challenges. At the same time, creating inclusive and welcoming working environments is essential to enable individuals from diverse backgrounds to contribute to their full potential. Equity further acknowledges that equal opportunities cannot be achieved without recognizing and addressing structural and systemic barriers that may perpetuate underrepresentation.

Impact

In this context, DEI is central to transformative initiatives such as the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030). As the Ocean Decade advances an ambitious research agenda aimed at supporting a sustainable future, it is critical to ensure that diverse voices are meaningfully engaged across all processes and activities. The DEI TT contributes to this effort by raising awareness of DEI challenges and identifying opportunities to strengthen inclusive practices across Ocean Decade initiatives.

Outreach and awareness-raising activities are therefore at the heart of the Task Team's work. Members actively contribute to major events such as the V.ECOP Days (2021), the OCEANS Conference (2021), and the One Ocean Science Congress (2025), as well as panel discussions, workshops, and targeted interventions. The Task Team is also represented in broader initiatives, including the Gender Expert Working Group with the release of the Ocean Decade Gender Action Plan(https://oceandecade.org/publications/ocean-decade-gender-action-plan/). In addition, DEI TT members have contributed to advancing the evidence base through publications ("Towards an increase in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in international ocean observing practices and initiatives" by van Stavel et al., 2021; "Leave no one behind in the UN Ocean Decade" by Elsler et al., 2025).

More recently, the team has focused on designing and implementing a survey examining the status, strategies, and enabling factors of DEI across Ocean Decade Actions. The output of this survey is aimed at providing guidance and supporting the development of context-specific strategies across international collaborations within and beyond the UN Ocean Decade, presented as a joint publication by the DEI Team and survey respondents entitled *"Strategies to broaden participation and engagement in sustainable international collaborations: lessons from the UN Ocean Decade"* (Satterthwaite et al., *submitted*). Our next steps will be to present the survey findings at national Ocean Decade committee meetings and other relevant forums to strengthen outreach, increase visibility, and highlight the continued need for intentional inclusion practices.

The Task Team operates as a small but committed group with a relatively flat and non-hierarchical structure. Activities are largely driven by individual initiatives led by different members, with coordination support provided through regular meetings facilitated primarily by Erin Satterthwaite.

While overall capacity remains limited, the team maintains strong motivation and engagement, focusing its efforts around three core pillars, and actively welcomes new members to contribute fresh perspectives and support a transition to the next generation:

Connect – Bringing together ocean professionals committed to advancing DEI in international processes, fostering a supportive community, and creating safe spaces for open and constructive dialogue on challenging topics.

Listen – Understanding the diverse dimensions of inclusion within the ocean community by actively engaging with stakeholders and identifying key needs, challenges, and intersectional barriers, particularly those affecting ECOPs.

Empower – Promoting the inclusion and active participation of diverse perspectives across Ocean Decade programmes and activities, including representation across generations, genders, ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds, geographic regions, and other dimensions of diversity.

Communication Channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/diversity-equity-and-inclusivity/

dei@ecopdecade.org

Ocean Literacy

Introduction

The Ocean Literacy Task Team (OLTT) was established in 2021 as one of the first task teams of the ECOP Programme. Our mission is to bridge the gap between ocean science and society, helping citizens broaden their perspective on marine issues and encouraging a sustainable connection with our ocean. We believe that by enhancing ocean literacy, we can catalyze the behavioral changes necessary to mitigate the climate crisis and fulfill the goals of the UN Ocean Decade. The vision of the OLTT is to create and share the inclusive ocean narrative (including science, indigenous knowledge, and traditional practices) that is needed for all of society to participate in, and benefit from, the UN Ocean Decade in order to create the ocean we need and want as a collective.

The OLTT has been shaped by the dedication of several coordinators since it was formed. We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of past coordinators Karina Higa, Houraa Daher, Gabriel Akoko Juma, Rebecca Zitoun, and Sofia Barboza.

Currently, the OLTT is led by Laura Khatib Lakiss, Shenghui Li, Adreeja Chatterjee, Camille Rivera, and Afiq Durrani (leading the Asia hub), and Sophia Laarissa and Chris P. Nwachukwu (leading the Africa hub).

We have been collaborating with a diverse range of global and regional partners to amplify our impact: UNESCO/IOC Ocean Literacy, Ocean Literacy With All Programme of the UN Ocean Decade, Youth4Ocean; Asia Hub Partners: Oceanus Conservation, Guardians of the Blue, Estuarine and Coastal Studies Foundation, Prameya Foundation, and the Myanmar Ocean Project; Africa Hub Partners: IOC Sub Commission for Africa and the Adjacent Island States, My Zalu, Foundation Mohammed VI for the Environmental Protection, Hassan II Center for Environmental Education, Luderitz Blue School.

Main achievements

- **Organization of two regional art contests** (South Pacific and Africa) and one global art contest in 2022 to raise awareness of the importance of the ocean and increase knowledge about current marine challenges.

- **The Ocean Literacy Series** (YouTube Playlist: tinyurl.com/47merr7m), a global project launched in 2024 which collects success stories from diverse regions, featuring innovative practices in local languages to foster global collaboration.

- **Organization of the side event “Diving from local to global ocean literacy – Exploring, sharing and developing successful practices to know, feel and join the living ocean”** at the UN Ocean Decade Conference 2024, co-organized with the International Ocean Institute, Institut de Ciències del Mar - CSIC, Universitat de Barcelona, Centro de Excelencia Severo Ochoa, Sustainable Ocean Alliance, Prep4Blue, EuroGOOS, International Marine Centre, Guardians of the Blue, Galway Atlantaquaria, the Irish Ocean Literacy Network, and Oceanogami. It presented global to local ocean literacy success stories and shared solutions to overcome current challenges in developing and spreading such practices through 4 interactive panels: Ocean Literacy & Sports, Removing Barriers for Ocean Literacy, Ocean Literacy in Science, and Ocean Literacy in Local Communities.



Side event “Diving from local to global ocean literacy – Exploring, sharing and developing successful practices to know, feel and join the living ocean” at the 2024 UN Ocean Decade Conference, Barcelona, Spain, April 2024.
Credits: International Ocean Institute.

- **Venice Declaration contribution and translation**:

In June 2024, the Ocean Literacy World Conference marked the launch of the Venice Declaration for Ocean Literacy in Action, a collective call to engage society in regenerating the ocean. The conference highlighted the power of cross-sector collaboration and the central role of Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs) as bridges between disciplines and generations, connecting knowledge to action and driving inclusive solutions. ECOPs contributed by translating the Venice Declaration into 14 languages, expanding its accessibility and reinforcing their role as facilitators of global knowledge dissemination.

Venice Declaration and translations: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000390297.



ECOPs reading the Venice Declaration at the Ocean Literacy World Conference, Venice, Italy, June 2024.
Credits: Courtesy of conference attendees.

- **Design and presentation of the poster "ECOPs Leadership in Promoting Ocean Literacy in Asia"** during the 2025 Xiamen Symposium on Marine Environmental Sciences (Xiamen, China, January 2025). Building on this experience, co-organization of the side event "Advancing Ocean Sustainability: The Role of Early Career Ocean Professionals in Capacity Building, Ocean Literacy and Collaborative Leaders" with IMECaN, which highlighted concrete pathways for ECOPs to contribute to capacity development, foster ocean-literate societies, and cultivate collaborative leadership for a sustainable ocean future.

- **The Ocean Literacy for Blue Citizenship** (OL4BC) project, aiming to enhance ECOPs' understanding of ocean policy processes, enabling them to communicate and advocate for sustainable ocean governance. The project disseminated a survey which highlighted that while ECOPs recognize the importance of policy engagement and are highly interested in it, over 64% lack direct experience due to unclear processes and information gaps. A detailed training plan was created following the needs identified. The OL4BC project also led to the organisation of the Blue Citizen a Hackathon, which aimed to raise awareness and capacities around the BBNJ Agreement during UNOC3.

- **Organization of the side event "Ocean Literacy Practices: Knowing, Feeling, Acting for the Ocean"** co-organized with EU4Ocean, the MENA Oceans Initiative and Ocean Generation at UNOC3 in June 2025. It showcased Global Ocean Literacies in Action, by highlighting a range of projects and practices from Asia, Middle East, Africa, North, Central & South America, and Europe at the Ocean Literacy Pavilion.



The "Ocean Literacy Practices: Knowing, Feeling, Acting for the Ocean" side event organizers and speakers at the Third UN Ocean Conference, Nice, France, June 2025. Credits: ECOP Programme.

- **Organization of the Ocean Literacy Hub Asia Roundtable** at the Blue Wave Conference in Shenzhen, China, in October 2025, highlighting members' OL activities across the region.



Ocean Literacy Asia Hub Roundtable at the Blue Wave Conference, Shenzhen, China, October 2025. Credits: Blue Wave Conference.

Currently, the OLTT is focused on implementing the Ocean Literacy for Blue Citizenship Training Course, starting in Europe and in Asia. We are also continuing the Ocean Literacy Series, highlighting the work of ocean literacy practitioners around the world in upcoming regional and global ocean events.

The ECOP Africa OL Hub is currently leading the ABC-SEA: AfriBlue Catalyst for Stewardship & Educ-Action cross-sector initiative, which aims to scale ocean literacy into practice across Africa by empowering local actors to lead their own activities. In its pilot phase, ABC-SEA is developing the Blue Guide, a modular, ready-to-use resource for designing and facilitating ocean literacy activities in both formal and informal settings, without requiring prior expertise. The initiative is currently seeking partners to co-develop, test, and scale these tools.

The OLTT is currently collaborating with the Ocean Literacy Across Languages (OLAL) project, led by Guangdong Ocean University. OLAL will: (1) establish a global, youth-led database of ocean literacy projects and actions, hosted on the ECOP Programme website, and (2) launch a multilingual Ocean Literacy Publication Series, beginning with Chinese and English and gradually expanding to other languages.

Call for Action

We are always seeking new partners, sponsors, and collaborators who share our vision. We invite you to join us in co-creating projects and campaigns which foster ocean literacy at global, regional, and local levels.



Communication Channels

Ocean Literacy Task Team: www.ecopdecade.org/ocean-literacy/

Ocean Literacy Asia Hub: www.ecopdecade.org/ocean literacy-asia/

Ocean Literacy Africa Hub: ecopdecade.org/africa/

ocean.literacy@ecopdecade.org

ocean.literacy_asia@ecopdecade.org

ocean.literacy_africa@ecopdecade.org

OceanBRIDGES

Introduction

OceanBRIDGES started in 2022, and was *co-founded by Audrey Hasson, Delphine Lobelle, and Sigi Gruber.*

The aim and mission of OceanBRIDGES

Diversity is essential to addressing changes in the ocean, which affects everyone through our shared global commons. Career stage is a key dimension of diversity. The added value of the OceanBRIDGES task team — Bridging (Ocean) Research, Innovation and Diversity across Generations of Experts and Stakeholders — lies in fostering two-way knowledge exchange between Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs) and Experienced Ocean Professionals (EOPs) working toward ocean solutions. ECOPs often face challenges in advancing knowledge, developing skills, and becoming future ocean leaders.
OceanBRIDGES is led by Audrey Hasson, Executive Director of GEO Blue Planet, together with Camille Cherques, Sigi Gruber (former European Commission official), Christine Knauss (University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science), and Delphine Lobelle (Fugro).

Impact

This update (September 2025–May 2026) focuses on implementing the All-Atlantic Ocean Research and Innovation Alliance (AAORIA), particularly through the Blue All-Atlantic Intergenerational Programme launched in September 2025 and related activities including the Intergenerational Dialogues (September 2025) and Intergenerational Hackathon (April 2026).

Key partners included the EU-funded OKEANO project, coordinated by the Marine Institute Ireland, together with JPI Oceans and KDM, IFREMER France, GEO Blue Planet, and numerous supporting organisations.

Recognising the important role of new generations of ocean professionals in shaping ocean stewardship, AAORIA is committed to integrating ECOPs into its activities through intergenerational learning, dialogue, and collaboration across generations, disciplines, cultures, and regions. The AAORIA Intergenerational Dialogues were designed with and for ECOPs to share ideas, propose solutions, and contribute to policymaking through practical experience. Facilitated by Experienced Ocean Professionals (EOPs), the sessions combined brainstorming and pitch presentations, enabling ECOPs to present innovative perspectives on Atlantic Ocean science and stewardship while also inspiring ECOPs.

The first dialogue took place during the Galway Statement 10-year

anniversary event in Galway, Ireland, in July 2023, focusing on priorities identified in the 2022 All-Atlantic Declaration. Strong engagement led to annual editions in 2024 and 2025 alongside the AAORIA Fora. With the launch of the All-Atlantic Blue Intergenerational Programme, these dialogues became a core pillar of the Programme and evolved into the successful Intergenerational Hackathon held in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil, alongside the 2026 AAORIA Forum.

Intergenerational Dialogues – Brussels, September 2025

The 2025 Dialogues brought together 41 ECOPs and 15 ocean professionals/coaches from 30 nationalities. Their policy recommendations included:

- Borderless ocean protection through implementation of the BBNJ Agreement via education and ocean literacy.
- A Permanent Atlantic Ocean Observation Strategy to coordinate long-term Atlantic observation efforts.
- An Atlantic Fisheries and Aquaculture Network supporting small-scale fishers, aquaculture operators, and Indigenous communities.
- An All-Atlantic Knowledge Hub integrating scientific, traditional, and local knowledge to strengthen coastal resilience.
- An AAORIA Hackathon Series bringing together scientists, policymakers, entrepreneurs, and communities to co-design practical ocean solutions.

These outcomes were presented during the 2025 AAORIA Forum.



Participants of the Intergenerational Dialogues on the occasion of the AAORIA Forum, September 2025, Brussels, Belgium. Credits: OceanBRIDGES.

Intergenerational Hackathon 2026 – Salvador de Bahia, Brazil

Building on previous dialogues, the OKEANO Intergenerational Team (IFREMER, JPI Oceans, the Marine Institute) and Sigi Gruber (OceanBRIDGES) organised the 2026 Intergenerational Ocean Hackathon alongside the AAORIA Forum, hosted by Brazil's Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation and SENAI CIMATEC, and endorsed as a UN Ocean Decade activity.



The different Intergenerational Hackathon 'Challenges Teams' together with the organising team, 13-14 April 2026, Salvador, Brazil. Credits: OceanBRIDGES.

Over two days in April 2026, some 70 ECOPs and 18 EOPs co-developed solutions addressing Atlantic challenges, including:

- Coastal resilience
- Low-cost ocean observation sensors
- Digital mapping of the Atlantic
- Support for small-scale fisheries and aquaculture
- Monitoring and management of sargassum blooms
- Ocean literacy through an All-Atlantic Blue Schools network

The Hackathon created strong collaboration among participants and became a major milestone of the Forum, culminating in project presentations and an award ceremony. The event was supported by numerous organisations committed to empowering the next generation of ocean leaders.



Sponsors and organizers of the 2026 Intergenerational Hackathon. Picture kindly made available by Lavinia Giulia Pomarico/Lisa Picatto - JPI Ocean (OKEANO project).

The All-Atlantic Blue Intergenerational Programme

Launched by Sigi Gruber during the AAORIA Forum in Brussels in September 2025, the Programme responds to growing Atlantic challenges including climate change biodiversity loss, pollution, and competing ocean uses.

Although many Atlantic initiatives and capacity-building programmes already exist, efforts remain fragmented. ECOPs — particularly from the Global South and SIDS — often face barriers to mentoring, mobility, leadership opportunities, and decision-making processes. The Programme addresses these gaps by building an inclusive, action-oriented intergenerational community connecting ECOPs, senior experts, policymakers, innovators, and coastal communities across the Atlantic.



Sigi Gruber launches the All-Atlantic Blue Intergenerational Programme at the AAORIA Forum, September 2025, Brussels, Belgium. Credits: OceanBRIDGES.

Supported by the EU-funded OKEANO project, coordinated within OceanBRIDGES and anchored in AAORIA, the **Programme aims to:**

1. Develop the next generation of Atlantic ocean leaders through mentoring, fellowships, and leadership pathways.

2. Connect existing Atlantic capacity-building initiatives through an integrated open-access platform.

3. Translate ocean knowledge into action by linking professionals with policymakers, communities, and industry.

4. Strengthen ocean diplomacy and long-term cooperation among Atlantic nations, including SIDS and less-developed countries.

5. Build trust and hope through collaborative ocean action benefiting coastal communities.

Open-access Digital Platform

Developed under the OKEANO project, the integrated open-access digital platform serves as the Programme's backbone. It includes:

- A curated database of training, mobility, and capacity-building opportunities;
- An interactive dashboard allowing users to filter opportunities by geography, theme, duration, and eligibility.

The platform is designed to remain open, interoperable, and complementary to existing initiatives, including those under the UN Ocean Decade.

What Makes the Programme Different? The All-Atlantic Blue Intergenerational Programme goes beyond traditional networking and training by creating a long-term Atlantic community where ECOPs senior experts, policymakers, innovators, and communities work together on real challenges. Participants engage in hands-on collaboration, intergenerational learning, mobility experiences, and policy-relevant co-creation. For example, an ECOP from a Caribbean SIDS may collaborate with a senior European scientist, an African policymaker, and a South American community leader to develop practical solutions for resilience, governance, or innovation.

Plans ahead

The Programme will continue expanding intergenerational cooperation across the Atlantic through future dialogues, hackathons, summer schools, travel grants for ECOP participation from the Global South and SIDS, etc, and digital collaboration tools aimed at strengthening ocean sustainability and long-term international All Atlantic cooperation. It will take forward the already developed prototypes generated from the intergenerational hackathon and upscale them; deliver policy-relevant outputs feeding into AAORIA, UN Ocean processes and in particular the UN Ocean Decade, the EU Mission "Restore Our Ocean and Waters" and the implementation of the European Ocean Pact.

Communication channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/ocean-bridges/

ocean.bridges@ecopdecade.org

Private Industry

Introduction

The Private Industry Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs) Task Team was established in April 2024. It was created in response to a clear gap within the ECOP Programme: the lack of a dedicated space for ECOPs working in, or interested in, private industry roles related to ocean sustainability and ocean science. To date, this task team remains the only ECOP space specifically focused on private industry, addressing a growing need to better integrate industry perspectives into ocean science and sustainability efforts, including those aligned with the UN Ocean Decade. The main mission of the Private Industry Task Team is to support, connect, and empower ECOPs engaging with ocean-related private industry, while raising awareness of the role industry plays in advancing ocean sustainability and science.

The task team's objectives are fourfold:

1. Networking: The task team facilitates meaningful connections among ECOPs by providing opportunities to network, collaborate, and exchange ideas. These activities support career growth and foster professional relationships across disciplines and regions within the ocean industry.
2. Knowledge Sharing: Platforms are created for ECOPs to share their work, career experiences, and best practices. This promotes mutual learning, innovation, and awareness of the diverse career pathways available to ECOPs in private industry.
3. Professional Development: The task team supports ECOPs' professional development by connecting them with established industry professionals and organisations. Through webinars, discussions, and mentorship-style exchanges, ECOPs gain insights into required skills, career trajectories, and opportunities within the private sector.
4. Raising Awareness: Internally, the task team raises awareness of events, conferences, trainings, and opportunities relevant to ECOPs. Externally, it highlights the work of ECOPs in private industry, encouraging their inclusion in ocean sustainability initiatives, particularly those contributing to the UN Ocean Decade.

The Private Industry Task Team is coordinated by a committed and internationally diverse leadership group. The current coordination team includes: Paula García Rodríguez, Sietske Fresow, Olivia Grech, Isabel Benito Garrido and Gavin Dmello. The team acknowledges and thanks Emma Kilcoyne, who previously served as a

coordinator and has since stepped down, for her valuable contributions during the task team's early development.

Impact

Since its establishment, the task team has successfully built a strong and active coordination structure and created a recognised space for private-industry-focused ECOPs. Key achievements include the organisation of a dedicated workshop at the OBPS Workshop VIII Conference (2024) titled "Bridging Oceans: Best Practices to Foster Strong Industry–Science Partnerships", featuring a guest presentation by the Head of the UN Global Compact Ocean Stewardship Coalition.

The task team has hosted several guest speaker webinars with professionals working in ocean-related private industry roles, including Anne Park (CEO, Sustainable Ocean Alliance), as well as multiple "ECOPs for ECOPs" webinars where ECOPs shared their career paths and professional experiences. A dedicated ECOP networking event further supported peer-to-peer exchange and collaboration. In addition, a LinkedIn group was successfully established and has grown to over 100 members, strengthening visibility and engagement within the community.

Reflections

The task team has created a valued and inclusive space for ECOPs nterested in private industry roles within the ocean science and sustainability sectors. Feedback from participants highlights strong engagement, insightful discussions, and meaningful connections. The international diversity of members, representing over 30 countries, further strengthens the relevance and impact of the group.



List of countries of origin of the Task Team members.
Credits: Private Industry Task Team.

Plans ahead

Until the end of the UN Ocean Decade, the task team aims to:

- Expand its network of ECOPs working in or interested in private industry
- Strengthen links with experienced industry professionals, inviting them to share about how they got to where they are, and potentially develop opportunities for ECOPs
- Increase ECOP participation in relevant events, workshops, and discussions
- Enhance the visibility of private industry ECOP contributions to ocean sustainability

Call for Action

- Invitation for new members to join the task team (register via the sign-up form or join the LinkedIn group, links below)
- Ongoing call for ECOPs to present to other ECOPs in webinars
- Open invitation for activity suggestions
- Outreach to industry professionals interested in engaging with ECOPs

Communication channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/private-industry-task-team/

privateindustry@ecopdecade.org

https://www.linkedin.com/groups/9886171/



6. ENDORSED PROJECTS



Credits: Kim Cuong Nguyen Trang/Ocean Image Bank

5 Years in Review

Endorsed projects

20

Already completed endorsed projects

3

out of 20

List of Endorsed Projects

East West Centre
Training-through-Research - Floating University
WASCAL Cabo Verde Graduate School
STORAGE
Seaworthy Collective
Citizens of Surf
Devising Early-Career Capacity Development in the Indian Ocean Region
Blue Futures Pathways
Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Blue Economy
A probabilistic model for plastic clean-up techs
Pandora Expeditions
KIOTEC-SEA
OZEAON
GAME (Global Approach in Marine Ecology)
Korean Network of Oceanic Teams
A bridge of oceanic dreams from Asia
Thinking Beyond the Tides
Ocean Literacy Across Languages
Blue Economy Network for ECOPs in LAC
ECOPs Empowered through FuncTec Monitoring

The following projects were submissions to the UN Ocean Decade Calls for Decade Actions and are now hosted under the ECOP Programme. We are delighted to have them within our Programme and always aim to promote their work and opportunities these projects have for our membership. We help strengthen their potential and increase their visibility through our networking opportunities.

As of May 2026, we host 20 projects and you can find more details about each of them on this page: https://www.ecopdecade.org/endorsed-projects/.

Below you will find information on 13 projects given in the order they joined us.

WASCAL Cabo Verde Graduate School

Introduction

Launched in 2019, this initiative was established with a clear and ambitious aim: to train a new generation of West African experts in climate change, marine sciences, and coastal management, blending academic excellence with hands-on practical fieldwork.

The programme is coordinated and led by Prof. Corrine Almeida of the Atlantic Technical University (UTA) in Cabo Verde, operating through the Institute of Engineering and Marine Sciences (ISECMAR).



Practical Classes with Prof. Reinhold Hanel and Dr. Evandro Lopes.
Credits: Márcio Medina.

- **ADMITTED STUDENTS**: 66
- **ADMITTED STUDENTS BY GENDER**: 41 male and 25 female
- **GRADUATES**: 38 students
- **FUNDING AMOUNT BMBF/ BMFTR**: + de 1.800.000 Euros

Beneficiary countries: Senegal, Mali, Ghana, Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Cabo Verde, Burkina Faso, Côte D'Ivoire, The Gambia, Niger, Guinea, Sierra Leone, East Timor, Brazil.

Main partners:

- GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel (Germany)
- Kiel University (CAU, Germany)
- Thünen Institute (Germany)
- National Institute of the Sea (IMar, Cabo Verde)
- Ocean Science Centre Mindelo (OSCM, Cabo Verde)
- Funded by the Federal Ministry of Research Technology and Space (BMFTR)



Campus of the Institute of Engineering and Marine Sciences at the Atlantic Technical University (ISECMAR/UTA).
Credits: Jandir Medina.

Impact

Since its implementation in 2019, the WASCAL Cabo Verde School, through the Master's Programme on Climate Changes and Marine Sciences (MRP-CCMS) and complementary training activities, has contributed significantly to human capacity development in the region.

The Master's programme trains up to 20 international MSc students per year, equipping them with interdisciplinary knowledge and technical skills in climate and marine sciences.

A flagship activity of the programme is the Shipboard Training, which provides students with hands-on experience in ocean observation. This training takes place on board local vessels and, in some cases, German research vessels.

During this activity, students:

- Operate oceanographic instruments and conduct in situ observations;
- Collect and analyse environmental and marine samples;
- Process and interpret oceanographic data;
- Contribute to scientific reporting;
- Participate in ongoing international research projects alongside scientific teams.

This practical component is essential in bridging theoretical knowledge with real-world application and strengthens students' ability to address complex ocean and climate-related challenges.

In addition to the Shipboard Training, the programme includes:

- Laboratory analysis (biological, chemical, and physical parameters);
- Coastal and marine data collection and management;
- Mathematical modelling and data analysis;
- Ocean governance and policy frameworks.

Overall, these activities have strengthened regional expertise, fostered international collaboration, and contributed to positioning Cabo Verde as a hub for ocean and climate science training.

Highlighted activities

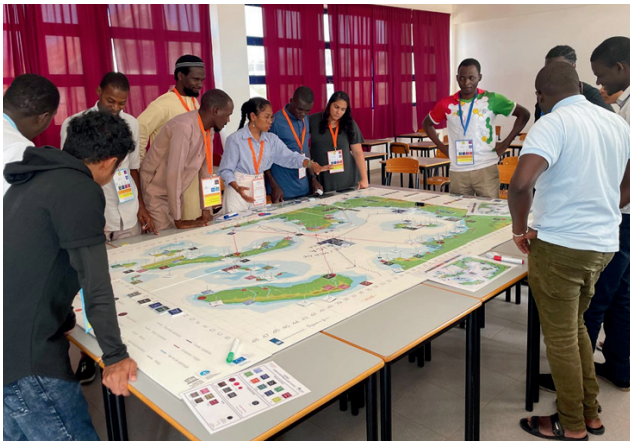
- Joint summer schools and training expeditions;
- Alumni engagement meetings to identify barriers (e.g., language challenges for Cape Verdean applicants);
- Integration of local marine research through partnerships with IMAR and OSCM.

Number and duration of cohorts:

- 1 Batch (2019-2020) - 12 students
- 2 Batch (2020-2021) - 14 students
- 3 Batch (2021-2022) - 11 students
- 4 Batch (2023-2024) - 13 students
- 5 Batch (2025-2026) - 15 students



WASCAL Floating University III - 4th Batch Students.
Credits: Paula Baierlein GEOMAR.



Practical classes with Dr. Marie Bonnin, Students from 5th Batch.
Credits: Márcio Medina.

Plans Ahead

Looking ahead, the WASCAL Cabo Verde School aims to further strengthen and expand its academic and training offer, with a continued focus on interdisciplinary and applied approaches. Key priorities include:

- Consolidating the MRP-CCMS programme and increasing its outreach;
- Expanding practical training opportunities, including ship-based and field activities;
- Strengthening partnerships with academic and research institutions;
- Promoting research on climate change adaptation and mitigation;
- Enhancing the science-policy interface in ocean governance.

Call for Action

- Open to new partnerships with universities, research institutes, and NGOs.
- Encourage collaborative projects linking climate science with fisheries, coastal livelihoods, and ocean governance.
- Seek regional and international stakeholders to support dissemination and alumni networks.

Communication Channels

https://wascalcv.org/

https://www.ecopdecade.org/wascal-cabo-verde-graduate-school/

wascalcv@uta.cv

https://www.facebook.com/100640049425377 3?ref=embed_page

https://www.instagram.com/wascalcaboverde/

The Training-Through-Research (TTR) — Floating University Programme

Introduction

The Training-Through-Research (TTR) — Floating University Programme is a national capacity development initiative operating in Russia since 2021, that got hosted under the UN Ocean Decade Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOP) Programme in the same year. The Programme builds a continuous training ecosystem in ocean and Earth sciences — from school students to PhD candidates — through an integrated annual cycle of educational, research, and career support activities.

The mission of the Floating University is to form a community of young researchers and support their professional growth for the development of scientific potential in Ocean and Earth sciences, providing hands-on, practical training in the field and in laboratories, and equipping participants with the skills and experience needed to contribute to ocean research and sustainable development.

The Programme is led by Dr. Natalia Stepanova, Director of the Floating University Coordination Centre at the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology (MIPT), and is implemented with the support of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation. Its implementation relies on active involvement of a consortium of over 20 leading universities, research institutes, and scientific organisations across Russia, with 30+ associated partner organisations, enabling broad access to infrastructure, expertise, and field-based opportunities.

Impact

Over the reporting period, the Programme engaged over 8,500 applicants from across Russia and around 100 international students from 30+ countries. A total of 3,500 participants attended Winter Schools in person, 327 students participated in marine expeditions, 62 completed research internships, and 337 participants graduated from the full programme cycle. Around 40 peer-reviewed publications were produced, co-authored by students and their mentors, including 12 in Q1 international journals, alongside 364 conference abstracts presented at 28 scientific events.

Annual cycle of activities

The Programme implemented a set of capacity development activities during the reporting period.

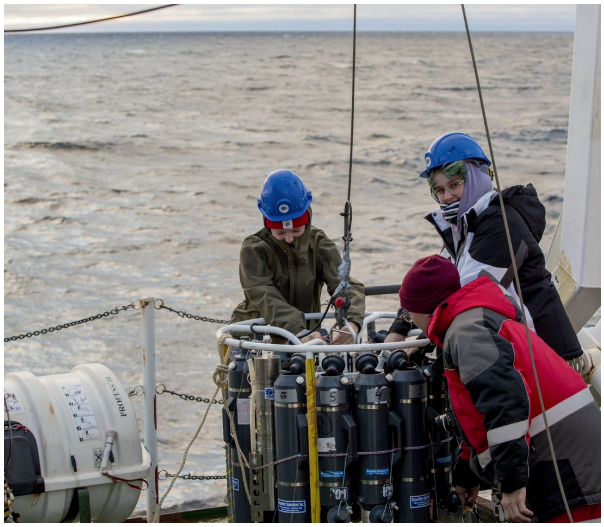
Six Winter Schools were delivered annually across 10+ venues simultaneously in different cities across Russia – from Kaliningrad to Vladivostok.

These three-day events provided geographically distributed access to ocean science education, combining lectures, workshops, practical sessions, and direct interaction with research groups and science-related industry partners. The Winter Schools play a critical role in early talent identification, career orientation, and broadening participation across regions, institutions, and disciplines.



Winter School at the "Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology and Shirshov Institute of Oceanology RAS (MIPT-SIO RAS)" venue, 2026. Credits: Floating University archive.





Participants of the MIPT-SIO RAS Floating University expedition to the Kara and Laptev Seas in 2024. Credits: Floating University archive.

Fourteen marine expeditions were conducted in the Arctic Ocean, Baltic Sea, and Far Eastern seas of Russia aboard research vessels including R/V *Akademik Boris Petrov*, R/V *Akademik Ioffe*, R/V *Akademik Mstislav Keldysh*, R/V *Professor Molchanov*, and R/V *Professor Multanovski*. Following the training-through-research approach, students and early-career researchers were fully integrated into professional scientific teams, acquiring practical skills in data collection, instrumentation, and analysis while contributing to real scientific outputs. This immersive model is widely recognised as highly effective for building practical competencies and integrating young specialists into the professional community.

A research internship initiative was launched in 2024 to complement expedition-based training, enabling scientists to offer short-term placements in their laboratories or as part of their own field campaigns. Through these opportunities, students engage with a variety of research teams across the country and contribute to ongoing scientific investigations.

The "Think Deeper" school was launched in 2024 as an additional initiative to support the academic and professional development of the Floating University alumni. The first in-person school engaged 38 graduates; the second edition in 2025 involved 49 participants and was followed by an online course on research planning, academic writing, and grant application preparation. This initiative strengthens the transition from student to PhD-level researcher and enhances participants' readiness for professional scientific careers.

Highlights

Three achievements stand out from the reporting period. First, the Programme established a full-cycle, scalable capacity development model — the only one of its kind in Russia — linking outreach, education, field research, and early-career professional development in a single integrated framework. Second, it significantly expanded access to ocean science education through geographically distributed and hybrid formats.

Third, it fostered broad interdisciplinary and inter-institutional collaboration across more than 50 organisations, as well as created a dynamic and growing community of early-career ocean professionals with a demonstrated strong retention in ocean-related fields.

Plans Ahead

Looking ahead to the end of the Ocean Decade, the Floating University aims to further develop and scale its capacity development model, expanding participation, strengthening partnerships, and enhancing the diversity of educational formats.

Key priorities include expanding the research internship programme by broadening the range of participating organisations and increasing involvement of industry partners, developing co-funding mechanisms to support participant mobility and programme administration. The "Think Deeper" initiative will be continued and further developed, refining its format to best meet the evolving needs of early-career researchers at the transition from student to independent scientist.

Engagement at the school level is a growing priority: dedicated events and field training opportunities for secondary school students are being developed to widen the entry point to the talent pipeline and strengthen links between school-level science education and university-level ocean research.

International collaboration is being actively developed, with a particular focus on enrolling students from the Commonwealth of Independent States in expeditions and gradually expanding the Programme's reach to the broader international English-speaking scientific and student community.

Call for Action

The Programme is strengthening its links with applied scientific projects and industry, inviting experts from commercial organisations to contribute lectures and courses at existing events and developing longer-term partnerships that connect early-career researchers with real-sector opportunities in ocean science and management.

The Floating University welcomes partnerships with research institutions, universities, international organisations, and industry partners interested in co-developing training activities, contributing to expeditions, or supporting participant mobility.



Communication Channels

https://pu-ocean.ru

https://www.ecopdecade.org/training-through-research-ttr-floating-university/

pu@ocean.ru

https://t.me/floating_university

Seaworthy Collective

Introduction

Founded in 2020 and active to the present day, Seaworthy Collective is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in the USA dedicated to supporting both current and aspiring entrepreneurs who are driving innovation for ocean impact. The organization's mission centers on bringing all hands on deck for ocean innovation by building awareness of and access to opportunities for individuals passionate about bettering the blue planet through entrepreneurship. Its programs are designed to bolster participants' capacities and confidence in pursuing new and emerging ventures in BlueTech, ultimately contributing to the growth of the ocean workforce and economy. Led by Founder and CEO Daniel Kleinman, Seaworthy Collective carries out its work in collaboration with key partners including NOAA and The Continuum.

Impact

Since launching its flagship Studio and Incubator program in 2021, Seaworthy Collective has delivered remarkable results across seven cohorts, supporting 111 founders across 57 ocean impact startups that have collectively raised over $34 million since graduating.

On the community side, Seaworthy's programs — including The Sea Change Makers Panel Series and the bi-annual Startup Showcase — have educated more than 5,000 people on BlueTech across over 80 events, spotlighting founders, fostering thought leadership, and creating role models within the ocean innovation community. The Sea Change Maker Fellowship further strengthens this pipeline by supporting students in workforce development and providing a direct pathway into BlueTech entrepreneurship. Through its Startup Programs, Seaworthy connects founders to a global network of over 250 mentors, collaborators, and investors with more than $2 billion in combined assets, further amplified by a $14 million partnership with NOAA through The Continuum. Complementing these efforts, The Shoreline — Seaworthy's community and network platform — activates its broader ecosystem to co-create and grow early-stage ventures.



Seaworthy's Impact since 2020. Credits: Seaworthy Collective.

Half a decade into our work following our ambitious vision, we are incredibly proud of what we've been able to accomplish to date. At the same time, in many ways we are just reaching "maturity" as an organization; having established

strong foundations to be able to scale our programs, collaborate more effectively, and dependably deliver meaningful outcomes for the current and aspiring entrepreneurs we serve.

Plans Ahead

Seaworthy Collective anticipates continuing to support ocean data startups through at least 2028 via The Continuum, while launching its investment fund, RegeneraSea later this year. Beyond that, we anticipate growing our work regionally across Florida, supporting community, ecosystem, and startup development from Miami to the Gulf Coast.

Call for Action

Seaworthy Collective seeks partners looking to leverage philanthropy to support scalable solutions, build regional ecosystems, and drive grassroots workforce development. Partners like Salesforce, NOAA, Environment Next, and the US Small Business Administration have fueled our work to date, and we continue to grow our work both regionally and globally.

Communication Channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/endorsed-projects/seaworthycollective/

https://www.seaworthycollective.com/post/sea-change-made-seaworthy-s-landmark-5-year-impact-report

https://www.instagram.com/seaworthycollective/

https://www.linkedin.com/company/seaworthycollective/



STORAGE

Introduction

The STORAGE project (plaSTic On beaches: theiR 3D-distribution and weAtherinG procEsses) is an interdisciplinary research initiative combining chemistry, marine and environmental sciences, and numerical modelling to better understand the fate of ocean plastic pollution in coastal environments.

The project began in August 2022 and ran until August 2025, under the coordination of Astrid Delorme. STORAGE focused on beaches as major accumulation zones for ocean plastic, which are estimated to accumulate approximately two thirds of plastics released into the ocean. STORAGE investigated the fate of this plastic by measuring the amount of plastic buried in the sand-column and measuring brittleness of plastics to assess its probability of fragmenting into microplastics.

The research aimed to better characterize the transportation and transformation of beached ocean plastics through repeated field surveys, analysis of polymer weathering, and the development of a conceptual beach fragmentation and retention framework.

The endorsement of STORAGE under the UN Ocean Decade Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOP) Programme has played a key role in shaping the project's communication, dissemination, and broader engagement. The project was conducted through collaborations with Sarah-Jeanne Royer, Laurent Lebreton, and Pierre-Yves Le Gac across three institutions: the Center for Marine Debris Research at Hawai'i Pacific University, IFREMER (France), and The Ocean Cleanup (Netherlands). These collaborations enable interdisciplinary knowledge exchange across science, industry, and policy sectors.

Impact

Scientific contributions, fieldwork and volunteer days: A central component of STORAGE has been repeated field-based investigations on Hawaiian beaches, with a total of 18 field visits conducted. These surveys focused on both surface and buried plastic debris, providing new insight into the vertical distribution of plastics in coastal systems. Findings show that a large proportion of plastic debris is not visible at the surface, but instead stored within the sand column, where it continues to fragment into secondary microplastics. These field campaigns were designed as open, participatory research days. Volunteers were invited to join full-day sampling efforts, contributing directly to data collection while gaining hands-on experience with field methodologies. Through these activities, participants uncovered buried plastics alongside the research team, often for the first time.

This approach supported both data collection and ocean literacy through direct engagement.

Publications and knowledge dissemination

STORAGE has resulted in peer-reviewed publications demonstrating the extent of buried plastics on Hawaiian beaches and the role of plastic degradation in secondary microplastic formation, with additional manuscripts under review or in preparation. All outputs are shared through open-access platforms and institutional repositories, ensuring accessibility and reuse. The project has also been presented at international conferences across ocean sciences, geosciences, and polymer science, supporting interdisciplinary knowledge exchange.

List of publications within the STORAGE Project:

Stone K, et al., Cambridge Prisms: Plastics (2025). https://doi.org/10.1017/plc.2025.10033
Delorme AE, et al., Microplast. Nanoplast. (2025). https://doi.org/10.1186/s43591-025-00128-7
Delorme AE, et al., Mar. Pollut. Bull. (2025). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpolbul.2025.117712
Royer SJ, et al., (2024). https://doi.org/10.3389/fenvs.2024.1386292

Capacity building and education

Training and mentoring have been integral to the project. Undergraduate and graduate students have been involved in fieldwork, laboratory analyses, and data processing, gaining hands-on experience in marine debris research. Students involved in STORAGE have had opportunities to present their work to broader audiences, including ECOP Programme Webinars 9 and 19. This has supported early engagement with scientific communication beyond their immediate academic environment. STORAGE has engaged a wide range of audiences, from scientific communities to local stakeholders and the general public. Outreach activities have included community meetings, educational events, and participation in beach clean-ups and environmental festivals across Hawaiʻi. This raised awareness of buried plastics and their role in generating secondary microplastics, supporting knowledge exchange with communities directly affected by plastic pollution.



Astrid Delorme with Students Explaining the Fieldsurvey Protocol to Collect Buried Plastics in the Sandcolumn. Credits: Astrid Delorme.

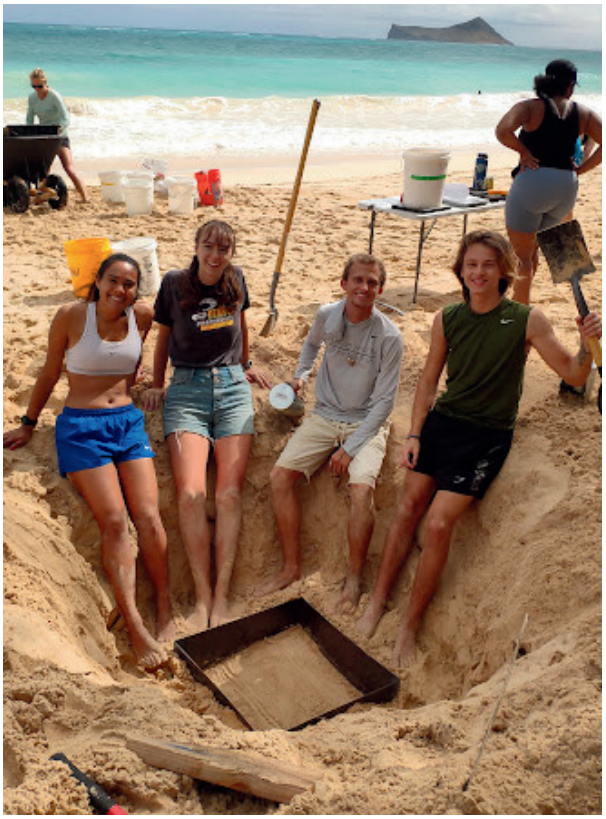
Reflections on partnerships and ECOP engagement:

The endorsement under the UN Ocean Decade ECOP Programme has played a key role in expanding the reach and visibility of STORAGE. While the project itself is research-focused, ECOP has enabled connections across disciplines and regions that would not have been accessible otherwise. These connections have supported collaborations, co-presentations, and broader dissemination of the project's work. Through ECOP Programme platforms, including webinars and online project profiles, the project has become more accessible to a global audience. This visibility has led to concrete opportunities and collaborations.

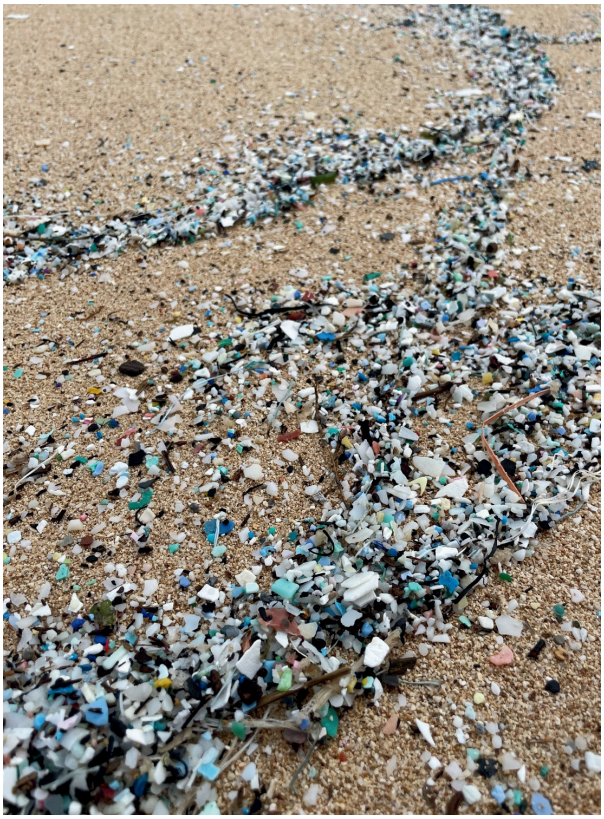
For example, the STORAGE project was identified through its ECOP presence by the Around the Blue documentary team, resulting in an interview and feature on plastic pollution on Hawaiian beaches. Similarly, connections established through the ECOP network led to participation in regional webinars and collaborations with international partners working on marine debris. Webinars have also been a key tool for dissemination and engagement. Through ECOP-led sessions such as "Plastics in the Pacific & Hawai'i" and "Trash to Treasure," the project has contributed to global discussions on marine plastic pollution, reaching audiences of early-career professionals, researchers, and practitioners. Importantly, this visibility has created a ripple effect: opportunities gained through ECOP have been extended to students and collaborators, allowing them to engage with wider audiences and networks. This highlights the role of the ECOP Programme not only in supporting individual projects, but in strengthening the broader community of early-career ocean professionals.

Plans Ahead

Although STORAGE has come to an end, the project has initiated partnerships and research that will continue to build on its scientific and outreach foundations. Ongoing work includes the completion and publication of research on plastic fragmentation, weathering, and distribution, as well as the further development of a conceptual framework describing the fragmentation and retention of plastics in coastal environments. Strengthening collaborations across disciplines and sectors remains a priority, particularly with organizations involved in marine debris monitoring and removal. Continued engagement with the ECOP Programme network will support knowledge exchange, visibility, and opportunities for international collaboration.



Fleldwork: sifting out plastics from the sandcolumn with volunteers.
Credits: Astrid Delorme.



Plastics on Kahuku beach, O'ahu, Hawai'i.
Credits: Astrid Delorme.

Call for Action

There is a need for closer collaboration with clean-up organizations and policymakers to translate scientific findings into sustained, actionable strategies, ensuring that interventions are informed by both scientific understanding and on-the-ground realities.

Communication channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/storage/

Citizens of Surf

Introduction

Citizens of Surf was initiated in 2021 as an Activity under the UN Ocean Decade, becoming endorsed as an ECOP Programme Project in 2023. Its mission is to equip surfers with the knowledge, understanding and tools to become active and engaged marine citizen scientists.

With more than 35 million people worldwide engaging in surfing, the project connects recreational ocean users with ocean science, contributing to the vision of "The Science We Need; for the Ocean We Want", specifically Challenge 10: Restore society's relationship with the Ocean. Working alongside surfers, it promotes ocean literacy while recognising and utilising local knowledge, and by bridging scientific research with lived coastal experience, Citizens of Surf aims to develop regenerative solutions for surf ecosystems and coastal communities.

The project is led by Natalie Fox, an ocean advocate, surf coach and marine social scientist, and is supported by a growing network of surfers, interdisciplinary researchers, practitioners, NGOs and coastal communities. It is affiliated under the Observatório de Literacia Oceânica, MARE NOVA, NOVA University Lisbon, Portugal.

Citizens of Surf is structured around four key objectives:

- Highlighting Synergies: bridging surfers and scientists around climate change, marine plastics, and biodiversity
- Forming Alliances: building partnerships and co-designing participatory research
- Models Making Sense: applying ocean literacy and social-ecological systems frameworks to help protect and preserve surf ecosystems
- Science Needs Data: using or developing surf-specific tools (e.g., Saturna, Smartfin) to collect ocean data

These are being delivered across five phases, from scientific publications and a surf documentary to partnerships, ongoing research, and a planned global citizen science programme from 2027.



BBNJ Treaty awareness session and protest with the Aljezur surf club, Arrifana, Portugal, May 2025. Credits: Emily Scharrifana.

Impact

Citizens of Surf has made strong progress through research, partnerships, and community engagement, including:

- Peer-reviewed publications (2021);
- Short documentary: The Convergence Zone;
- Funded partnerships such as ReGeneration Surf;
- Contributions to international citizen science data-sharing guidance;
- Growing delivery of workshops, webinars and pilot studies.

Highlighted Activities

- Ocean Literacy Workshops and Courses (since 2023): Delivered in association with partners including Soul & Surf Portugal, Surf with Amigas, BoardBabes Algarve, and Aljezur Surf Club, combining ocean literacy with surf education.
- eDNA Citizen Science Workshop (2023, UK): A pilot at Croyde Beach testing water sampling during surf sessions, demonstrating the feasibility of surfer-led biodiversity monitoring.
- ReGeneration Surf: A collaborative, WSL-funded initiative showcased through a film trailer (made by Sunny Breger) screened at the Ericeira Surf Film Festival.
- Webinars and Dialogue: Events such as “Stoked About Ocean Science” (2023) and “Change in the Lineup” (2026), including presenting in the UN Ocean Conference’s Digital Ocean Pavilion (2025).

- Scientific Contributions: Input to UNESCO citizen science data-sharing guidelines and co-authorship of a publication on marine plastic pollution: “Highly engaged marine users can help monitor marine plastic pollution in under-accessed environments” (Puskic et al., 2026), further demonstrating the scientific value of engaged ocean users.

- Emerging Research: Joining Jessica Bradshaw, in a surfer-led sea surface temperature data collection initiative, contributing to an upcoming scientific paper.

Reflections

Citizens of Surf highlights the untapped potential of surfers as contributors to ocean science. Surfers hold valuable experiential knowledge that, when supported with the right tools, can contribute meaningfully to research.

As the project evolves, key priorities include scaling globally while maintaining scientific integrity. Ongoing work includes a forthcoming book chapter on ocean literacy and PhD applications, positioning Citizens of Surf to expand its impact and foster a more inclusive, participatory future for ocean science.



eDNA workshop in Croyde, Devon, UK, September 2023.
Credits: Andrew Parish.



Learning about Kelp restoration with scientists at IPLeira, Peniche, Portugal with World Surf Lwague commentators, March 2022.
Credits: Margarita Samual/WSL.



Microplastic beach cleans and sampling with Soul and Surf Portugal, Bordeira Beach, Costa Vicentina, Portugal, August 2024.
Credits: Soul & Surf Portugal.

Communication channels

www.ecopdecade.org/citizensofsurf

natalie@ecopdecade.org

Pandora Expeditions

Introduction

Pandora Expeditions launched its first project in 2025 in Australia, which is now on hold due to funding difficulties.

The Coral reefs of the Northern regions of Australia thrive in some of the most extreme and challenging conditions on the planet. With tidal ranges reaching up to 9 meters (30 feet), waters with high turbidity, and the fierce forces of monsoons and cyclones, these reefs are a true testament to nature's resilience. Comparable to the Arabian Gulf and the Red Sea, where resilient corals have recently been discovered, they hold immense potential. Despite the global concerns for the world's coral reefs and even if the reefs of the Northern regions of Australia are considered to be in some of the most intact marine and coastal environments, information on the value and condition of the Northern regions of Australia's coast and seas are currently either lacking or not easily accessible. We aim to shine the light on the marine biodiversity of the Northen territory, Australia, and unveil the many mysteries and unknown of these waters.

Leading this effort is Tania Mac-Kay, Founder and CEO of Pandora Expeditions and lead Marine Biologist. We are currently working in collaboration with the Darwin waterfront Corporation and a number of local researchers from other organisations such as NT Fisheries, and Groote Aqua Aboriginal Corporation.

Impact

As we have just finished the pilot phases and proof of concept, we are yet to be able to offer others to come to join us. We hope to get to this stage once the next phase is confirmed.

Highlighted activities

During the pilot phase, we were able to show the current biodiversity of the lagoon, a semi-enclosed body of water connected to the Darwin harbour, and show the presence of coral species naturally found there. Using microfragmentation techniques, we demonstrated that the lagoon will be a suitable environment for the growth of the corals and therefore a suitable environment for a coral garden. The lagoon having currently a much higher amount of micro and macro algae, we successfully completed the first introduction of herbivores, demonstrating the potential for additional marine biota to help rebalance the ecosystem.

Reflections

The pilot phase showed strong evidence that the lagoon provides

suitable environmental conditions for coral propagation and habitat enhancement. As it is not affected by the tidal movement it has allowed to have an excellent accessible starting point to study the many mysteries of the Northern Territory marine ecosystem and its corals.

Plans ahead

Not much is currently known about these waters. Our work is showing enormous potential, and hopefully, will one day do justice in reflecting the amazing biodiversity of the Northern Territory. Until then, we are open to connecting with people who plan to visit these regions to learn more about the projects, maybe providing a helping hand as a volunteer, or simply connect.

Call for Action

Being in a region that is quite remote and much closer to Asia than the rest of Australia, we would be highly interested in connecting with those that might have experience in similar situations or environments, possibly creating collaboration or partnerships.



Communication Channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/pandora-expeditions/

https://www.linkedin.com/company/pandora-expeditions/

https://www.facebook.com/pandora.expeditions

https://www.instagram.com/pandoraexpeditions?igsh=aXB0bW91ZDdoYnA3

Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Blue Economy (CoE-SUBE)

Introduction

Established on 28 February 2022 and running through 27 February 2025, the Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Blue Economy (CoE-SUBE) was created in Slovenia to foster meaningful interactions across the knowledge triangle of education, research, and innovation, with a focus on the sustainable and smart blue economy. The project's mission aligns closely with the implementation of the EU's internal and foreign policy as well as the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, reflecting its broad and forward-looking ambitions. Built on a collaborative, inter-institutional, and region-wide approach, CoE-SUBE places particular emphasis on the Adriatic region and the relations between EU and Mediterranean countries. The initiative is coordinated and led by EVRO-SREDOZEMSKA UNIVERZA (EMUNI University) in Slovenia, which also serves as its main institutional partner, anchoring the project's academic and strategic direction.

Impact

The project has achieved significant results in research, education, and stakeholder engagement over its three-year duration:

- 3 Research Papers: Published open access, focusing on topics like the "shape of blue growth" and Mediterranean blue acceleration;
- 2 Intensive Trainings: Organized for 30 mid-career scholars to build capacity in blue economy principles;
- 1 Summer School: Conducted for 30 master students, providing a 40-hour intensive programme on interdisciplinary blue economy domains;
- 3 Policy Briefs: Developed to target EU and national policy-makers, addressing policy benefits, regional opportunities, and small-scale fisheries;
- Competence Framework: Established a structured framework for sustainable blue economy to shape education across the Euro-Mediterranean region;
- Stakeholder Events: Organized 2 dialogue events for regional stakeholders and 2 artistic events reaching approximately 200 local citizens.

Highlighted Activities

One of the key highlights is the Competence Framework for Sustainable Blue Economy, which was designed to standardize and elevate blue economy education across the region. Additionally, the project’s Policy Briefs successfully bridged the gap between scientific research and policy implementation, particularly in the context of the European Green Deal.

Reflections

The work done has demonstrated the power of an interdisciplinary approach in addressing complex marine issues. By combining high-level research with practical training and public engagement, the project has successfully built a regional community of practice dedicated to the sustainable management of our seas and oceans.

Plans Ahead

- Educational Impact: The Competence Framework and the set of short, freely accessible video materials will remain available as essential learning resources for the region.

- Ocean Decade Alignment: The project's outputs directly contribute to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, particularly in fostering ocean literacy and sustainable blue growth.

Communication Channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/endorsed-projects/jean-monnet-centre-of-excellence/

https://www.linkedin.com/in/diana-lorena-rico-velez/

https://www.linkedin.com/in/mounir-ghribi-58b1822/

https://www.linkedin.com/in/centre-of-excellence-on-sustainable-blue-economy-coe-sube-762436279/

Global Approach in Marine Ecology (GAME)

Introduction

GAME (Global Approach in Marine Ecology) was established at GEOMAR in Germany in late 2002. Since then, 23 global research projects on topics like ocean warming, eutrophication, bioinvasions, microplastics and light pollution have been accomplished in the framework of the program. Their results have been published in more than 50 peer-reviewed science articles. The first GAME project during the UN Ocean Decade started in January 2021 and addressed the effects of light pollution on invertebrate herbivores in coastal waters. The most recent project on the effects of underwater soundscapes on the colonization of marine hard-bottoms by invertebrate larvae started in January 2026.

GAME projects comprise 12 months, while they start in January and end in December of the same year. Each year all participating students are involved in GAME activities from March to December.

What is the aim of GAME ?

GAME is a program in research-based education. Each year up to 20 students, who work together in bi-national two-persons-teams, investigate the effects of human-induced environmental change on coastal ecosystems. They do this by simultaneously implementing identical experiments in different biogeographical regions and climate zones.



Installation of the experimental set-up for the GAME project 2023 in Cadiz, Spain.
Credits: Chiara Dieing.

Each project consists of three distinct phases:

1. Preparatory course at GEOMAR in Kiel (in March): the project participants, together with GEOMAR scientists, develop the design of the modular experiment that will be used in the global study, test run the envisaged methods and by this acquire the skills needed for planning and implementing experiments in marine ecology.

2. Practical research work (April – September): the student teams carry out the modular experiments at the different GAME partner institutes. The data they obtain form the basis for the global analysis as well as for their master's theses.

3. Analysis of data and communication of results (October – December): back at GEOMAR the course starts with an intensive training in biostatistics, which is followed by the analysis and the interpretation of the collected data.

Afterwards, the participants focus on the communication of their results. Workshops on presenting and writing in science accompany this part, during which the students also develop a synoptical presentation that they deliver at different universities in the north of Germany. The last phase of each project is dedicated to career planning inside and outside academia as well as to the writing of Master theses and manuscripts for peer-review journals. GAME's modular network-based approach, including the international exchange of students, combines practical research work in marine ecology with an intensive science training as well as cultural and social experiences. To this date, GAME collaborated with more than 40 marine research institutions in over 30 countries on six continents, and its network allows the multilateral transfer of knowledge as well as the exchange of students around the world.

Who is the coordinator/lead ?

Dr. Mark Lenz, Marine Ecology Department, GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel.

Main partners

Currently, the GAME research partners are: Universidade Técnica do Atlântico, Cabo Verde, Instituto de Investigaciones Marinas, IIM-CSIC, Spain, Centro Oceanografico de Vigo, Spain, Marine and Environmental Sciences Centre Madeira, Portugal, Universidad de Cádiz, Spain, Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción, Chile, University of Hokkaido, Japan, Åbo Akademi University, Finland, University of the Philippines/Marine Science Institute, Philippines, Centre for Marine and Coastal Studies/Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia, School of Environment and Natural Sciences, Bangor University, UK, Israel Oceanographic and Limnological Research, Israel.

The GAME projects in 2021 to 2025 have generously been funded by Klaus Tschira Stiftung and Hans und Ria Messer Stiftung.

Impact

Since 2021, five global research projects on the effects of artificial light at night on marine shallow-water benthic ecosystems have been accomplished. In these projects, 74 (73% females) students from 10 countries (Cabo Verde, Chile, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Portugal, and Spain) participated.



The participants of the GAME project in 2024. Credits: Mark Lenz.

They investigated the effects of artificial light at night on marine herbivores (in 2021), on filter feeders such as mussels (2022), on the colonization of hard-bottoms (2023), on macroalgae (2024), and on epiphytes (2025). To support these projects, we held 10 courses at GEOMAR (17.5 months in total) that included 10 field trips, 5 biostats as well 5 science writing workshops and 5 trainings on science presentations. All of these activities lasted several days.

Highlighted activities

The research project in 2023, in which the GAME student teams investigated the influence of artificial light at night on marine hard-bottom communities was maybe the most insightful study of the series of projects on light pollution. We found effects of the night-time illumination on the biomass, diversity and composition of hard-bottom communities in all the systems investigated (9 sites worldwide). However, the size and the direction of the effects varied largely between the sites. This latter observation is also in line with the findings of the other projects we conducted on light pollution and therefore constitutes maybe the main outcome. Effects of artificial light at night on benthic systems are widespread, but their nature is highly system specific.

Reflections

Researching the effects of artificial light at night on marine systems is an emerging field, in which the GAME participants have pioneered. They gained important insights, made valuable experiences and collected a very comprehensive set of empirical data about the influence of light pollution on marine systems. We are still in process of publishing the results that were obtained, but we are convinced that we can make a major contribution to the field.

Plans ahead

We are currently implementing a global research project on the influence of underwater soundscapes on the formation of marine hard-bottom communities. For this, the GAME student teams will investigate whether anthropogenic sounds (i.e. boat noise) and natural soundscapes (e.g. reef sounds) influence the settlement behaviour of invertebrate larvae. In 2027 and 2028, we are planning to research whether the tolerance to environmental stress such as warming and desalination differs between male and female individuals of marine invertebrates (i.e. in mussels and amphipods). The research topics for 2029 and 2030 have not yet been identified, but if our investigation on the influence of underwater soundscapes on hard-bottom communities yields interesting results, it is very likely that we will research how underwater noise and artificial light at night in combination may affect the diversity and composition of marine communities.

Call for Action

We are constantly looking for sponsors who are willing to support the GAME research and teaching activities. Furthermore, we are constantly looking for new partner institutes and partner scientists all over the world.

Communication channels

https://www.geomar.de/game/

https://www.ecopdecade.org/game/

http://www.oceanblogs.org/game_

http://www.instagram.com/game_geomar

mlenz@geomar.de

Fundraising, Anne Tempelmann:

atempelmann@geomar.de



Team Malaysia in a lab practical during the preparatory course at GEOMAR in Kiel, Germany, in March 2026.
Credits: Mark Lenz.

OZEAON

Introduction

Ozeaon was endorsed as a UN Ocean Decade project at the start of 2025, and is building a globally accessible platform to accelerate regenerative innovation across the ocean–climate nexus. Led by founder Joseph Flynn, the project was initially developed through academic research and design exploration and has since evolved into an execution-ready platform initiative with a growing multidisciplinary team, advisory ecosystem, and technical delivery network. Its mission is to connect knowledge, collaboration, opportunity, and funding in one integrated ecosystem, helping transform ideas, research, and community action into practical solutions for ocean health, climate resilience, and sustainable development.

At its core, Ozeaon is being developed as regenerative innovation infrastructure. The platform brings together open science, educational resources, community participation, project visibility, and future funding pathways so that learners, researchers, innovators, organisations, and funders can engage more effectively in solution-building. Over time, Ozeaon aims to further expand this ecosystem through ethical AI, transparent digital infrastructure, and blockchain-enabled participation tools that strengthen accountability, inclusion, and long-term impact. Its roadmap reflects a phased approach from beta user testing and core platform launch through to governance infrastructure and the future Ozeaon Climate Intelligence System.

Ozeaon's work is grounded in a belief that the challenge is not only the lack of solutions, but the fragmentation of knowledge, people, institutions, and support systems needed to bring them into action. The project therefore focuses on creating connective infrastructure; a space where education, participation, collaboration, visibility, and future funding can operate together rather than in isolation.

The project is coordinated and led by Joseph Flynn, Founder and CEO of Ozeaon and UN Ocean Decade Project Lead. Joseph is a sustainability leader, regenerative systems designer, and trans-disciplinary innovator working at the intersection of environmental resilience, human wellbeing, design and emerging technologies. His work integrates open science, regenerative finance, ethical AI, and decentralised governance to address challenges across the ocean–climate–land nexus. He holds a Master in Design for Health & Wellbeing from ESAD.cr, IPLEIRIA in Portugal and a Master of Contemporary Art from the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne, and has undertaken extensive training across climate

leadership, regenerative finance, blue economy strategy, web development and technology for sustainable development.

Main partners and Ecosystem support

Ozeaon has developed through a wide network of collaborators, partners, and ecosystem contributors. Technical delivery partnerships with Tandem Creative Dev and ZentixSoft are helping establish the platform's foundations in full-stack development, database architecture, AI integration, and blockchain infrastructure. The project also draws strength from academic and ecosystem relationships including ESAD.cr | IPLEIRIA, CeteMare Ocean Science Laboratory, and wider networks such as ClimateLaunchpad, DOHE, ADT4Blue, Ocean Community, RISE UP For the Ocean, Wellbeing Economy Alliance, and the Global Partnership on Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter (GPML).

The advisory ecosystem has also been an important part of Ozeaon's development. Current advisory roles include Community Engagement & Social Impact (Jack Dyer, PhD), Ocean Literacy & Culture (Ana Vitória Tereza de Magalhães), Regenerative Education & Learning (Victor Lopes Mascarenhas), Regenerative Economics (Stephanie Mabbutt), Sustainability & Climate Science (Kilian Woods), Web3 & Blockchain Sustainability (Alberto Alhadeff & Ginevra Mancini), AI Ethics & Digital Governance (Piera Giordano), and Art, Design & Media (Jamie Allen). This advisory support helps ensure the project develops with scientific credibility, educational integrity, responsible governance, and strong ecosystem alignment.

Impact

One of Ozeaon's most important milestones has been its official endorsement under the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development through the Early Career Ocean Professionals Programme, providing strong international recognition for its mission and relevance. Since endorsement, the project has continued to strengthen its conceptual, strategic, and operational foundations.

Ozeaon has participated in several major accelerator and innovation programmes that have played a significant role in its growth. These include ClimateLaunchpad 2025 Portugal, where the platform refined its business model and financial planning; the Go-Together EdTech Accelerator, which helped transform Ozeaon from an early-stage concept into a more structured, team-led, execution-ready initiative; and ADT4Blue – Advanced Digital Technologies for the Blue Economy, which is supporting the refinement of the future Ozeaon Climate Intelligence System and related dMRV-oriented capabilities.

A major organisational achievement has been the development of a

multidisciplinary team and advisory structure of more than 20 contributors spanning sustainability, education, AI, blockchain, software engineering, stakeholder engagement, design, and communications. This has enabled Ozeaon to move into active platform architecture and web development with a clear phased roadmap and technical delivery structure. Early validation has also been supported by global multidisciplinary research surveys and ongoing ecosystem engagement. The 2026 pitch deck notes that platform architecture and web development are underway and identifies forward KPI categories including users onboarded, community participation, partnerships formed, open calls listed, projects featured, and institutional members onboarded.

Another important achievement is the strengthening of Ozeaon's academic foundation. In 2026, the article "Speculative and circular design applied to oceanic health and wellbeing – Envisioning possible futures with OZEAON project" by Joseph Flynn, Teresa Mouga and Cláudia Pernencar was published in The Design Journal.
DOI: 10.1080/14606925.2026.2653184
Permanent link: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14606925.2026.2653184

This publication situates Ozeaon within contemporary discourse on design, sustainability, ocean futures, and applied regenerative systems thinking, and reflects the project's roots in research-led exploration as well as its transition into real-world implementation.

Ozeaon has also continued to build visibility and relevance through participation in strategic events and gatherings. In 2026, Joseph Flynn and stakeholder engagement team member Alfinna Yebelanti participated in European Ocean Days at the European Commission in Brussels, engaging with policymakers, researchers, innovators, and mission-aligned organisations. Ozeaon was also represented at the International Symposium on Transformative Ocean Science in Venice, and the project's network-building extended through engagement with Ocean Space and the SEA BEYOND Ocean Literacy Centre. These activities built on earlier public showcasing at the University of Algarve H2O & Sustainability Summit and Web Summit Lisbon, where the project generated interest from students, researchers, technologists, and sustainability practitioners. The project has additionally received independent recognition through a published Venture Spotlight by Ocean Tech Insider.

Reflections

A central reflection from Ozeaon's journey so far is that regenerative innovation does not fail for lack of ideas alone. In many cases, promising knowledge, people, and opportunities already exist, but they remain disconnected across sectors, disciplines, and geographies.



OZEAON Mission. Credits: OZEAON.

This is especially true in the ocean space, where scientific knowledge, community priorities, mission-driven funding, educational access, and implementation pathways are often separated. Ozeaon has therefore been shaped around the idea that infrastructure for connection is itself a meaningful intervention. By helping link learning, collaboration, project development, and future funding, the platform aims to create more coherent pathways from knowledge to action.

Another reflection is that interdisciplinary work is essential. Ozeaon's progress has depended not only on ocean and sustainability expertise, but on design, governance, education, communications, engineering, and ethical technology thinking. This has reinforced the importance of building transdisciplinary systems that are not only technically functional, but publicly engaging, ethically grounded, and responsive to real-world complexity.

Plans Ahead

Ozeaon is currently preparing for its initial public launch and continued phased development. Near-term plans include beta user testing, payments and blockchain implementation, platform launch, and feature expansion. Longer term, the roadmap includes mobile development, deeper governance infrastructure through the planned Ozeaon Foundation, and the future Ozeaon Climate Intelligence Sy stem which is intended to support climate intelligence, project integrity, verification infrastructure, and dMRV-aligned workflows for regenerative initiatives.

Until the end of the Ocean Decade, Ozeaon aims to continue building globally accessible infrastructure that supports learning, participation, project development, and future funding pathways for ocean, climate, and regenerative solutions. The project also aims to deepen its educational resources framework, including work toward an Indigenous Knowledge Hub, expand collaborations with universities and mission-driven organisations, and strengthen the ecosystem needed to support ocean-positive and regenerative innovation at scale.



OZEAON Mission. Credits: OZEAON.

Call for Action

Ozeaon welcomes collaboration with universities, researchers, innovators, mission-driven organisations, funders, designers, developers, and partners interested in open science, regenerative development, ocean literacy, climate resilience, and community-driven innovation. The project is especially interested in partnerships that can help strengthen educational content, project pipelines, ethical technology governance, and visibility for regenerative initiatives.

Communication Channels

https://ozeaon.com/

https://www.ecopdecade.org/ozeaon/

joseph@ozeaon.com

partnerships@ozeaon.com

KIOTEC-CEA

Introduction

The Korea-Indonesia Ocean Technology Capacity Enhancement Action (KIOTEC-CEA) is designed to enhance the capabilities of early-career ocean professionals (ECOPs) in Indonesia by providing advanced training and fostering international collaboration. The project will be carried out through the utilization of training and cooperation centers established by the governments of Korea and Indonesia. These centers function as operational hubs for delivering capacity-building activities, including education, technical training, and collaborative research. While grounded in Korea-Indonesia cooperation, it will also extend engagement to other regional partners, including Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.

KIOTEC-CEA was established on 24th February 2025 as a single-story training center. Its official inauguration was attended by university and institutional partners and also marked the first training session conducted at the facility. Subsequently, KIOTEC expanded the center into a two-story facility, incorporating additional training support infrastructure.

The KIOTEC Training Center is the result of a joint initiative by the governments of Korea and Indonesia, formalized through a six-year agreement. The primary objective of this initiative is to develop and implement capacity-building programs based in Indonesia, with the agreement to be renewed every five years.

Main mission

To build a network of skilled, innovative, and globally connected marine professionals who can lead efforts to protect and sustainably manage marine resources in Indonesia and the broader Southeast Asian region.

Coordinator and main partners

The project is led by Dr. Park Hansan, a Principal Scientist at Korea Institute of Ocean Science and Technology (KIOST) and Vice-Chair of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO. He brings extensive expertise in ocean science and international collaboration, with a strong commitment to advancing maritime initiatives and strengthening capacity-building efforts, particularly in developing regions.

The main partners of KIOTEC-CEA include the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea, the Ministry of Food Affairs of Indonesia, the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries of Indonesia, and the Korea Institute of Ocean Science and Technology(KIOST). In addition, KIOTEC-CEA collaborates with leading universities in Indonesia, including Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB), IPB University (IPB), Hasanuddin

University (UNHAS), Diponegoro University (UNDIP), Gadjah Mada University (UGM), Padjadjaran University (UNPAD), Brawijaya University (UB), Pattimura University (UNPATTI), and Udayana University (UNUD).

Impact

Main achievements

- **Graduate-Level Education** Successfully managed scholarships for master's and doctoral degree studies in marine and fisheries sciences and technology for young scientists/researchers in Indonesia (master's degree) and Korea (doctoral degree). For the master's degree, there are 40 awardees in Phase 1 (2023-2025) and 40 awardees in Phase 2 (2025-2027). Meanwhile, there are 4 awardees of doctoral degree scholarship on going study in Korea.

- **Short-Term Technical Training** Successfully conduct short-term training programs in the operation of marine research and survey equipment, especially in oceanographic instruments. These programs were conducted before the KIOTEC-CEA endorsement. The total short-term technical trainings conducted since 2023 are:
- Marine Survey Equipment Training: 4 times, 160 participants;
- Special Topic Course: 5 times, 120 participants.

- **ECOPs Exchange Program** Successfully facilitates exchange programs between Indonesian and Korean ECOPs, allowing participants to gain international experience, collaborate on research projects, and build professional networks through institutional and cultural visits to Korea. This program was conducted 3 times from 2023 to 2025 and will be conducted in 2026, inviting Indonesian young scientists, awardees, and government officials.

- **Short-Term Research Support** Provide funding and logistical support for short-term research projects conducted by ECOPs, focusing on topics such as marine biodiversity, coastal management, and sustainable fisheries.

Highlights activities

- **Korea Visit Program:** The KIOTEC Korea Visit Program 2026 (26 April - 1 May) brings Indonesian officials and scholars to South Korea for an intensive comparative study in marine and fisheries technologies. The program combines technical visits to leading research institutions like PKNU and KIOST with cultural immersions to enhance sustainable maritime capacity and strengthen bilateral ties.



KIOTEC Korea Visit 2024 to Pukyong National University (PKNU). Credits: KIOTEC/BAG.



Cross-cultural experience at Gyeongbokgung Palace, KIOTEC Korea Visit 2025. Credits: KIOTEC/BAG.

- **Marine Survey Equipment Training:** The Marine Survey Equipment Training (MSET) 2026 (April 13-16, Jakarta) equips Indonesian master's students from nine leading universities with essential ocean observation skills. Through classroom lectures and hands-on field training, participants master critical marine survey instruments (including ADCP, CTD sensors, and sediment samplers) along with data processing using Python to advance sustainable marine research and environmental monitoring



Master Degree students learning marine survey equipment onboard during the 4-day MSET 2025 training programme. Credits: KIOTEC/BAG.



Participants deploying CTD sensors as part of oceanographic field practice activities. Credits: KIOTEC/BAG.

Reflections

Through the KIOTEC-CEA initiative, we have seen tangible improvements in the capacity, skills, and confidence of Indonesia's Early-Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs). The combination of hands-on technical training and international exchange experiences has proven highly effective in bridging crucial knowledge gaps. Moving forward, we hope this strong bilateral collaboration goes beyond technology transfer, continuously expanding a globally connected network of innovative professionals to ensure the sustainable management of marine resources across Southeast Asia.

Communication Channels

https://www.kiotec.org/

https://www.ecopdecade.org/KIOTEC-CEA/

https://www.instagram.com/bluearc.global/

https://www.instagram.com/kiotec_org/

https://www.linkedin.com/company/bluearcglobal

Ocean Literacy Across Languages (OLAL)

Introduction

The Ocean Literacy Across Languages (OLAL) project started in October 2025 and will run until the end of the UN Ocean Decade in 2030. Led by Guangdong Ocean University (China) under the ECOP Programme, OLAL is an ECOP-driven initiative that aims to empower communities to connect, learn and act for the ocean across cultures and languages. Its mission is to address language barriers in ocean knowledge, especially in countries where English is not an official language, by co-developing multilingual ocean literacy resources and platforms that reflect both global best practices and local grounded perspectives.

OLAL project is led by Shenghui Li (Guangdong Ocean University, ECOP China) in collaboration with ECOP Programme partners and a growing network of young ocean professionals, educators, NGOs and community groups. Key partners include Shanghai Jiao Tong University Press, China Ocean Mineral Resources R&D Association, and ECOP-China, as well as regional ECOP hubs, youth-led organisations and institutions involved in the Blue Wave Conference, which provides a platform for ECOPs to connect ocean literacy with science, policy and public engagement.

The project's book series brings together co-authors from more than 20 countries, further underscoring its commitment to multilingual and cross-cultural collaboration on ocean literacy.



First in-person gathering of the Ocean Literacy Asia Hub team at the Blue Wave Conference 2025 in Shenzhen. Credits: Blue Wave Conference 2025.

Impact

OLAL has begun establishing a global, youth-led database of ocean literacy projects and actions hosted on the ECOP Programme website, and has laid the groundwork for a multilingual Ocean Literacy Publication Series, starting with Chinese and English.

Through conference contributions and collaborative writing processes, the project is mapping existing initiatives, compiling case studies and identifying priorities for future translations and co-created materials.



Presentation of the OLAL project at the ECOP Programme Townhall of the Ocean Sciences Meeting 2026 in Glasgow, Scotland. Credits: Shenghui Li.

A major activity to highlight is OLAL's involvement in the first Blue Wave Conference: Youth Empowerment for Ocean Science and Action, held on 30–31 October 2025 in Shenzhen, China. Ocean literacy was a core pillar of the conference, with a Promoting Ocean Literacy Workshop convened by OLAL leadership that brought together educators, ECOPs and community groups to share practices on blue school networks, co-developing teaching resources, and using citizen science and youth field surveys to strengthen public understanding of the ocean. The conference also launched the 2025 Blue Wave Shenzhen Initiative, which calls for a Global Partnership for Youth Empowerment in Ocean Science and Action and positions ocean literacy as a central strand of youth-driven marine stewardship.



Release of the "2025 Blue Wave Shenzhen Initiative" (from left to right: Shenghui Li, Evgeniia Kostianaia, Alvin Baloloy, Laura Khatib, Gayathra Bandara, and Adreeja Chatterjee).
Credits: Blue Wave Conference 2025.

Reflecting on the work so far, OLAL demonstrates that addressing language barriers is essential for inclusive ocean literacy and for recognising diverse ways of relating to the ocean. Working across languages has opened space for local knowledge, stories and cultural references to be brought into ocean literacy discussions, while underscoring the need for sustained support for translators, educators and ECOPs who bridge global concepts and local realities.

Plans ahead

By the end of the project and the Ocean Decade, OLAL plans to:

- Expand its multilingual Ocean Literacy Publication Series beyond Chinese and English to additional languages, prioritising underserved and non-English-speaking communities.

- Consolidate and regularly update the youth-led global database of ocean literacy projects and actions on the ECOP Programme website, turning it into a living resource for practitioners, educators and policymakers.

- Deepen collaboration with regional partners and events such as future editions of the Blue Wave Conference, integrating OLAL materials into trainings, workshops, youth leadership programmes and blue schools activities.

- Develop practical guidance on co-creating and translating ocean literacy resources, including workflows, terminology approaches and examples that others can adapt in their own contexts.

As part of the OLAL Ocean Literacy Publication Series, three books are currently in progress:

- An international ocean literacy best practices volume, entitled Learning from the Blue: Best Practices and Emerging Voices in Ocean Literacy.

- A China ocean literacy best-practices volume documenting Chinese experiences along the coastline from the south to the north.

- A China–France whale and dolphin conservation volume, which will be published in three languages (Chinese, English and French) to support cross-cultural learning and cooperation on marine mammal conservation.

Call for Action

We warmly welcome new partnerships with educators, ECOP networks, language professionals, NGOs and institutions interested in co-developing or testing multilingual ocean literacy resources, contributing case studies to the OLAL database, or hosting OLAL-related workshops and sessions. In particular, we are looking for collaborators who can help identify priority languages and audiences, pilot materials in schools and community programmes, and share expertise on inclusive, culturally grounded communication.



Communication Channels

https://oceandecade.org/actions/ocean-literacy-across-languages/

lishenghui1227@163.com

Blue Economy Capacity Network for Latin America and the Caribbean Empowering ECOPs for Ocean Sustainability

Introduction

Running from 2025 to 2030, this initiative is driven by a clear mission to build a dynamic regional network of VET institutions and secondary schools that empower Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs) as agents of blue economy transformation across Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Led and coordinated by 2811 Global under the direction of Waldo Soto Bruna, the project spans four core implementation countries — Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Ecuador — while extending its reach to Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Brazil, and the broader Latin American region through hybrid formats and targeted scholarship mechanisms. The project is structured around four integrated components designed to work in concert: the Blue Economy Academy, focused on capacity building; the Ocean Climathon, driving innovation; the Blue Economy & Jobs Conference, enabling policy dialogue; and the Blue Economy Lab, supporting incubation and the development of emerging blue economy ventures.

Main partners

- Universidad del Magdalena, Universidad de Valparaíso, Universidad de Concepción, UCN, Universidad del Norte;
- INVEMAR, Comisión Colombiana del Océano (CCO), COPAS Coastal;
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC), WWF Chile, IOC-UNESCO;
- Sustainable Ocean Alliance (SOA) Global and SOA Latin America;
- SENA (Colombia), DUOC UC (Chile), AIEP (Chile), Uniminuto (Colombia), ESPOL, UISEK (Ecuador);
- Oceánico Labs, Impact Hub Bogotá, ITS Rio, Instituto Legado, UNAM, Alumbra, Iniciativa Azul.

Impact

Activity 1: Santa Marta Declaration 2030

The Santa Marta Declaration 2030 is the policy flagship of BLUE-LAC-ECOPs. It emerged from the Blue Economy & Jobs Conference held in Santa Marta, Colombia, and represents the region's first collective commitment to advancing blue skills, ocean entrepreneurship, and ECOP leadership as drivers of sustainable ocean economies in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Declaration was co-authored and signed by ECOPs, educators, policymakers, and representatives from universities, civil society organizations, and public institutions across Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, and the Caribbean. ECOP signatories were not symbolic

participants — they served as co-authors of thematic working groups, ensuring that the priorities of early career ocean professionals were embedded at the core of the commitments adopted.

Key highlights

- First regional declaration linking blue skills, ocean jobs, and ECOP leadership in a formal policy commitment;
- Co-authored through a transdisciplinary process integrating Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and scientific perspectives;
- ECOP signatories committed to a follow-up roadmap of action through 2030;
- Endorsed by institutional partners including universities, government agencies, and conservation organizations;
- Aligned with the UN Ocean Decade principles of co-design, inclusion, and capacity development.

The Declaration establishes a monitoring and accountability framework, with annual reviews led by the regional ECOP network. It has become a reference document for national blue economy policy dialogues in participating countries.

Here is the declaration: https://blueeconomylabs.com/declaracion



Leader team of the Blue Economy Lab project, Santa Marta, Colombia, 2025.
Credits: Blue Economy Lab, 2811.

Activity 2: Blue Economy & Jobs Conference, Santa Marta 2025

The Blue Economy & Jobs Conference held in Santa Marta, Colombia, in 2025 was the central convening event of BLUE-LAC-ECOPS during its first implementation phase. The conference brought together over 150 participants from across Latin America, the Caribbean, and Europe, including ECOPs, university researchers, government representatives, private sector innovators, and international partners affiliated with UNESCO's Ocean Decade network.

A dedicated ECOP Workshop was held as a core session of the conference program. This workshop was designed and facilitated by ECOPs themselves, in partnership with 2811's Blue Economy Lab team.

Participants engaged in peer learning, co-designed solutions to regional ocean challenges, and drafted key thematic inputs that were later integrated into the Santa Marta Declaration 2030.

Key figures :

- 200+ participants from Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Caribbean nations, and the EU;
- 1 dedicated ECOP Workshop with participatory methodology;
- UNESCO Ocean Decade representatives participated as keynote and panel contributors;
- Representatives from INVEMAR, CCO, SOA Latin America, and DUOC UC;
- Youth-led innovation pitch sessions with Ocean Climathon pre-selection process;
- Policy dialogue panels resulting in direct inputs to the Santa Marta Declaration 2030.

The conference also served as a platform for launching the regional ECOP Network for Blue Economy, which is designed to sustain collaboration and peer mentoring beyond the event itself. Connections established at Santa Marta are now driving partnership development for the Academy and Climathon phases of the project.

Here is the conference portal: https://blueeconomylabs.com/la-conferencia.



Panelists of the Blue Economy Conference Colombia 2025. Credits: Blue Economy Lab, 2811.



Panelists of the Blue Economy Conference Colombia 2025. Credits: Blue Economy Lab, 2811.



Panelists of the Blue Economy Conference Colombia 2025. Credits: Blue Economy Lab, 2811.



Participants of the Blue Economy Conference Colombia 2025. Credits: Blue Economy Lab, 2811.

Plans ahead

BLUE-LAC-ECOPs is entering its most active implementation phase in 2026, with two major initiatives scheduled to expand the reach and depth of the project significantly.

Blue Economy Academy 2026 — For Youth and Educators

The Blue Economy Academy 2026 is the cornerstone capacity-building component of BLUE-LAC-ECOPS. It is designed as a structured training program targeting two interconnected audiences: young people (ages 16–25) in coastal communities and vocational students, and secondary school and VET educators who will integrate ocean literacy and blue economy principles into their curricula.

Key features of the Academy 2026:

- Hybrid format: in-person modules in Antofagasta, Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador, complemented by online sessions accessible across the Caribbean and the broader LAC region;
- Modules co-designed with university partners, INVEMAR, SOA, and ECOP representatives;
- Connection to the Ocean Climathon: Academy graduates will be eligible to join innovation teams.

The Academy 2026 also includes a dedicated module for teachers, developed in partnership with FME, on integrating ocean literacy into school-level curricula — directly expanding the Blue Schools network across the region.

Ocean Climathon — Antofagasta, Chile

The Ocean Climathon in Antofagasta represents the innovation and action pillar of BLUE-LAC-ECOPs. Antofagasta was selected as the host city for its strategic importance as a major port city in northern Chile, its proximity to the Atacama Desert coast — one of the world's most biodiverse marine ecosystems — and its active network of youth innovation actors already engaged with 2811's Blue Economy Lab.

The Ocean Climathon is a multi-day innovation challenge where youth teams, mentored by ECOPs, develop solutions to local marine and coastal challenges. Challenge topics include microplastic pollution, sustainable artisanal fisheries, coastal tourism resilience, marine biotechnology applications, and climate adaptation for fishing communities.

Key features of the Climathon:

- Open call for youth innovators from across Antofagasta, Chile;
- ECOPs serving as team mentors and technical advisors throughout the challenge;
- Jury composed of scientists, entrepreneurs, investors, and public sector representatives;
- Documentation of all solutions contributed to the regional knowledge repository.

Call for Action

BLUE-LAC-ECOPs is actively seeking collaborators in the following areas:

- Educational institutions (universities, VET schools, secondary schools) interested in co-delivering Blue Economy Academy modules or joining the Blue Schools network;
- ECOP networks and associations in the Caribbean, Mexico, Brazil, and the Pacific seeking to connect with the LAC blue economy ecosystem;
- Funders and impact investors aligned with blue economy, ocean literacy, and green skills in developing regions;
- Research institutions interested in co-developing the knowledge products and policy documentation of the project;
- Innovation hubs and accelerators looking to connect their ecosystems with the Ocean Climathon pipeline.

We warmly welcome outreach from any organization or individual aligned with the ECOP Programme's mission and the UN Ocean Decade's vision for the ocean we need for the future we want.

Communication Channels

www.2811global.com

waldo@2811global.com

https://www.linkedin.com/company/2811global

https://www.instagram.com/2811platform/

For questions related to the Blue Economy Academy, Ocean Climathon, or partnership opportunities, please contact Waldo Soto Bruna (project coordinator) at waldo@2811global.com or Remy Rupp (fundraising and innovation lead) at remy@2811global.com.



ECOPs Empowered Through FuncTech Monitoring

Introduction

ECOPs Empowered through FuncTec Monitoring is a recently endorsed Ocean Decade project led by Dr. Diana Morales de Anda at Cinvestav Mérida in Mexico. The project was endorsed in March 2026 for its initial implementation and is being developed as a collaborative effort during the upcoming years of the Ocean Decade. Its mission is to empower Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs) through the co-development and application of functional ecology and emerging technologies for reef monitoring.

The project advances more direct, process-oriented approaches to reef assessment by combining prototype development, field testing, training, and network-building. Rather than relying only on conventional descriptors, the initiative seeks to connect ecological information with measurable ecosystem processes and practical monitoring and conservation tools. Current collaborations and exchanges are being developed with UNAM units in Mazatlán, Sisal, and Puerto Morelos, as well as CICIMAR-IPN and the University of Guadalajara, with a strong emphasis on interdisciplinary learning and the empowerment of early-career women researchers in marine technologies.

Impact

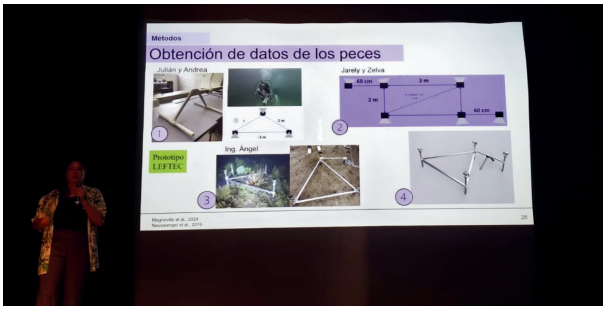
Although the project is still in its early stages, important foundations have already been established. The team has been strengthening the development of a stereo-video prototype camera system designed to support direct field observations and functional monitoring of reef fishes.





Prototype camera network system under development for reef monitoring.
Top: *Undergraduate student Jarely Soto and Selva Loza explaining camera deployment.*
Bottom: *Jarely Soto, Selva Loza, and Diana Morales.*
Credits: Project team.

Currently, the initiative involves six undergraduate and six master's students working on ecosystem functioning and emerging technologies, while fostering training opportunities that help them develop and present their work.





Master's student Andrea Fonseca's project on nutrient fluxes mediated by fish.
Top*: presenting her project and the development of the prototype at Cinvestav seminars;*
Bottom: *sample filtration at the "Laboratorio de Corales" in Xcaret.*
Credits: Project team.

The project aims to become a platform for collaboration, training, and growth among early-career researchers working with marine technologies. Students are also involved in project development and in other capacities, such as diving and peer training.





Student participation and training with members of the initial phase initiative.
Top: *Preparation of the first prototype built by students, Andrea Fonseca, Andrés de la Torre, Julián Salem, and Diana Morales.*
Bottom: *Diving training in Noh-Mozon Cenote, Yucatán, prior to the April 2026 monitoring expedition, Maria Fernanda Tarazona, Andrea Fonseca, Claudia Montes, and Diana Morales.*
Credits: Project team.

Ongoing exchanges with partner institutions are helping to build a network focused on monitoring innovation, shared learning, and joint capacity development. Recent outputs related to this broader line of work include a contribution highlighting women in reef research and a recent scientific paper on reef fish diversity and nutrient-related functional indicators. In parallel, a group proposal has been submitted

to SECIHTI (Mexico's Secretariat of Science, Humanities, Technology, and Innovation) to secure support for consolidating and expanding this initiative.

One of the main lessons from this initial period is that building technical capacity, confidence, and collaboration from the beginning creates momentum.



Members of the project team during the initial phase of the initiative. From left to right: Zelva Loza, Mirella Hernández, Julián Salem, Diana Morales, Jarely Soto, and Andrea Fonseca.
Credits: Project team.

Plans ahead

The project's first field expedition in late April 2026 tested the stereo-video prototype under real field conditions and provided the first opportunity to evaluate system performance, refine the monitoring design, and guide the next phase of technical development. Looking ahead, the project aims to continue strengthening a collaborative network of ECOPs working at the intersection of reef ecology, ecosystem functioning, and emerging technologies. Planned efforts include improving and testing monitoring tools, expanding student training, fostering cross-institutional collaborations, and building partnerships to help scale the initiative. The project also plans to present its vision and early progress at Reef Futures and other conferences to connect with new partners and broaden its reach.

Call for Action

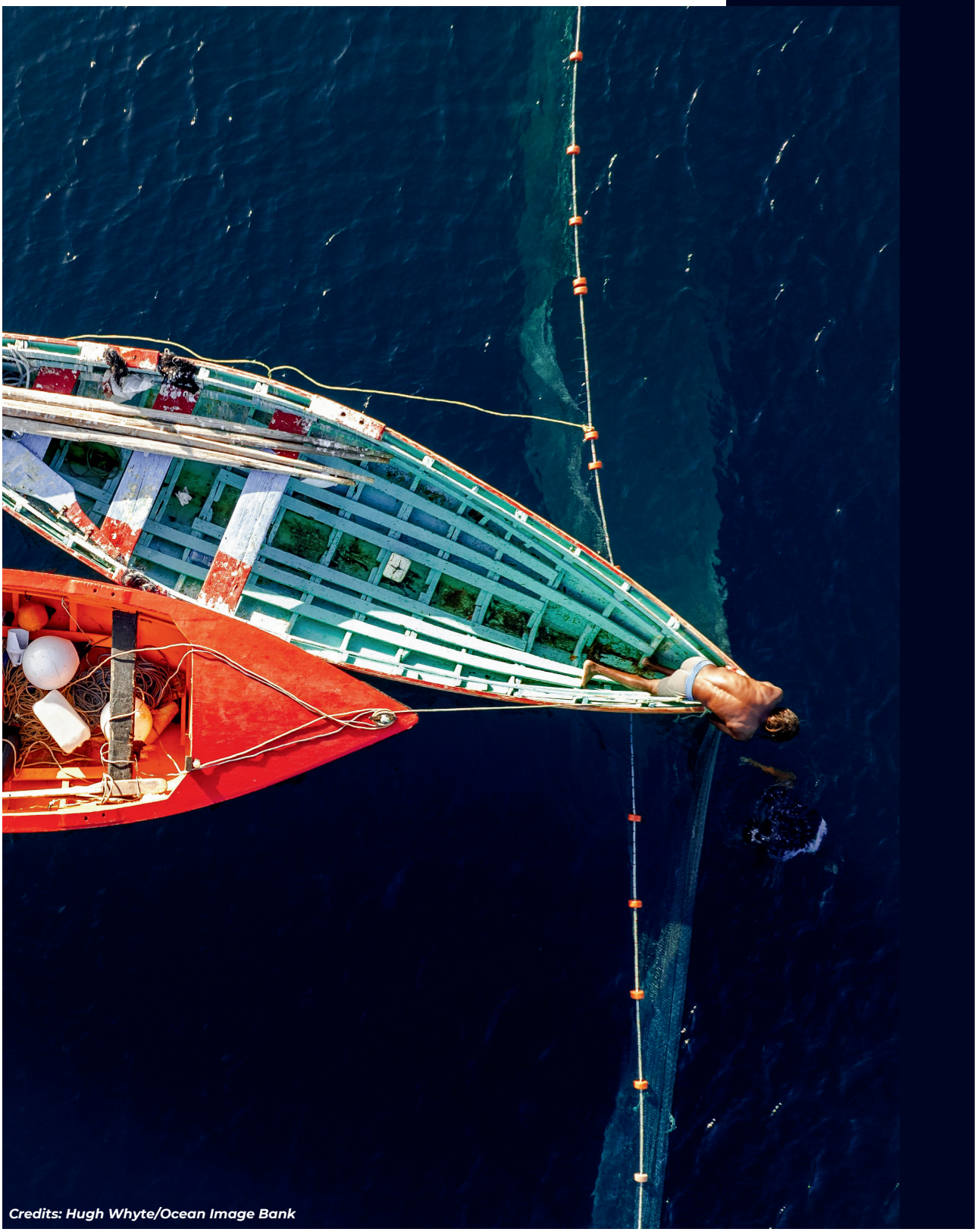
We welcome collaboration with researchers, conservation practitioners, students, institutions, and aligned initiatives interested in co-developing technologies, participating in field trials, supporting training opportunities, or building comparative monitoring efforts across sites and regions. This project is open to partnerships that strengthen both science and ECOP leadership through collaboration, training, and community-building.

Communication channels

https://www.ecopdecade.org/empowered-through-functec-monitoring/

dianae.moralesa@cinvestav.mx

7. CONCLUSIONS



Credits: Hugh Whyte/Ocean Image Bank

Five years of the official existence of the ECOP Programme, from June 2021, when we received the endorsement letter, until June 2026, provide for several key reflections.

First, the ECOP Programme has significantly expanded: from an Informal Working Group of 42 people in 2019, we have grown into a large international network with 9088 members in 168 countries as of May 2026. The Programme consists of 6 regional nodes (Africa, Asia, Caribbean SIDS, Central America, Europe and Pacific SIDS) and over 60 national nodes (60 countries), 6 Task Teams (Capacity Development, Deep Ocean, DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion), OceanBRIDGES, Ocean Literacy, and Private Industry) and 20 endorsed projects from UN Ocean Decade Calls for Actions. This is a response to the essential need for ECOPs worldwide to play an important role in the UN Ocean Decade processes and dialogues, the need for support for the youth to choose an ocean career and for early career specialists to stay in the ocean field and develop their expertise and networking.

Second, our achievements are a direct result of the volunteer, non-paid work of most of the coordinators of our nodes and task teams and our members. This is a tribute to their enthusiasm, personal commitment, and dedication to the cause we are working towards. This means contributing their time and efforts among their other study, work, and family commitments, for free, simply because they deem the mission of the ECOP Programme meaningful and inspirational. The strength of the Programme has always been in the team effort and spirit, in the unitedness, in creating something valuable not for yourself, but for all your fellow ECOPs in your country, and ultimately, for your country as a whole, because the ocean sectors of tomorrow largely depend on the level of investment in and support for the ECOPs and youth of today.

Third, the ECOP Programme has seen a growing interest in collaboration from various organizations around the world. ECOPs worldwide have been continuously invited to speak or moderate at conferences, join working and expert groups, both within the UN Ocean Decade ecosystem and in the broader ocean community. Committed support from the IOC-UNESCO since the beginning of the Ocean Decade has undoubtedly led to the recognition of the important role of ECOPs in the ocean-related space. The Programme has collaborated for many side and satellite events, workshops and townhalls with various partners, raising essential topics of capacity development, innovation, intersectoral, geopolitical and inter-generational inclusivity, networking and leadership.

The above confirms that significant progress has been made since the First Global Planning Meeting in

Copenhagen, Denmark, in 2019. However, this progress has still been affected by the lack of overall funding. More long-term investments will ensure stable expansion of the Programme, where the coordinating teams could dedicate their time with peace of mind knowing that their great efforts are financially compensated. This factor will also determine the future of the ECOP Programme after the end of the UN Ocean Decade in 2030, whether the Programme will cease to exist or not. With secured funding for the coordination teams at the regional and national levels and for the task teams, so much more can be done until 2030, to ensure that more ECOPs in any country feel supported, heard and valued in their ocean careers.

The ultimate goal for us is to become ***the*** place for ECOPs worldwide in finding information about capacity development, financial support, regional and national early career networks, and connecting with like-minded individuals deeply caring about the Ocean. The ECOP Programme welcomes new nodes as the aim is to expand our presence in as many countries of the world as possible. In November 2023, the ECOP Programme released an onboarding handbook for its coordinators, compiled by the former Asia node coordinator Raphael Roman. It represents guidance and protocols, designed to assist anyone running or looking to set up a node, task team or thematic hub. It can be found here: https://tinyurl.com/mryk3zma. Please reach out to us and we will guide you through the process.

We will continue to create a worldwide, extensive "pool of partners" who commit to financially support ECOPs for their work in the Programme, for conference travel and for capacity development activities. The Programme aims to expand its cooperation with the Ocean Decade Capacity Development Facility and OceanTeacher Global Academy to respond to the needs of ECOPs worldwide for high-quality, accessible courses, trainings and workshops, both online and in-person. We will further develop efficient, long-lasting cooperation with various types of stakeholders, from academia to NGOs and private industry, strengthening connections with UN Ocean Decade Programmes, Contributions, and Projects, National Decade Committees, Decade Collaborative Centres and Decade Coordination Offices.

We need ***you*** to make a lasting impact on the future of ocean science – ***together***.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Credits: Dani Escayola/Ocean Image Bank

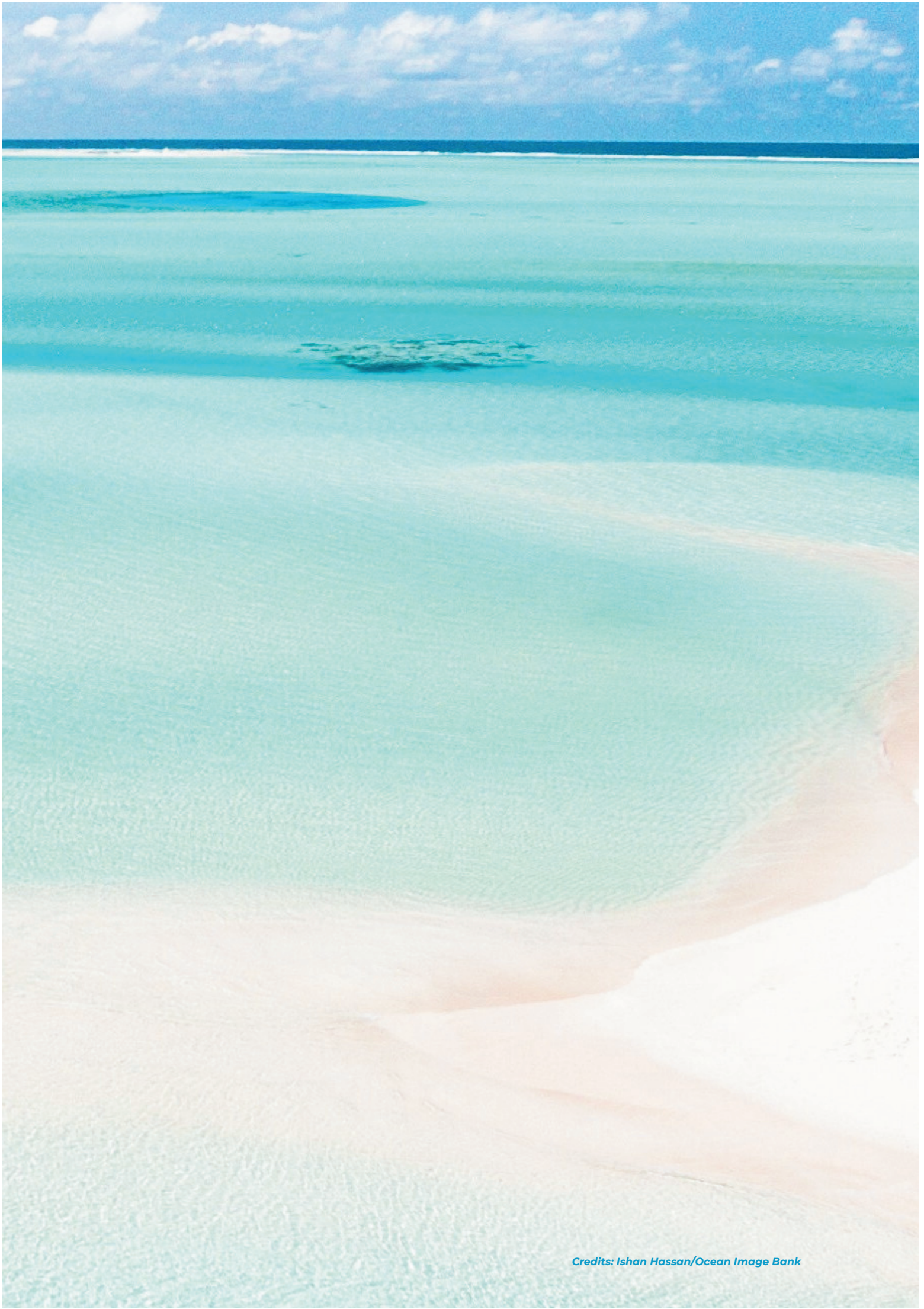
We would like to thank all the coordinators of regional and national nodes, leads of task teams, and endorsed projects, for these detailed and valuable contributions. We are sincerely grateful to all the members of our 9,000+ community for your cooperation, enthusiasm, and commitment to pave the way towards the Ocean We Want. What has helped the ECOP Programme gone this far is your dedication, passion, and fascinating teamwork across the globe. The strength of the Programme has always been in its spirit: to support, to welcome, to connect.

Special huge thanks goes to our Design Manager Manon Hetsch for creating the beautiful and captivating design of this report.

We immensely appreciate the support and cooperation of our partners, who have worked with us throughout these years. We have co-designed trainings and webinars, run side events and panels, created databases and we are sure that we will achieve much more in the coming years.

However, all of this still would not have been possible without the immense administrative and organizational support from the IOC-UNESCO since the very beginning in 2019 and the financial support from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD).

We genuinely thank Vladimir Ryabinin, Julian Barbière, and Alison Clausen for your decision to support us back in the day when “ECOP” was not even a term. Thank you for believing in us.



Credits: Ishan Hassan/Ocean Image Bank

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

www.ecopdecade.org/webinars

www.ecopdecade.org/bluecadproject/

www.ecopdecade.org/opportunities-database/

www.ecopdecade.org/opportunities/ocean-networks/

www.ecopdecade.org/ecopreports

OUR SOCIAL MEDIA :

@Early Career Ocean Professionals

@ECOP_Programme

@OceanDecadeECOP

@ecop_programme

@ecopprogramme

ECOP
Early Career
Ocean Professionals

2021 2030 United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development