



2021 United Nations Decade
2030 of Ocean Science
for Sustainable Development



ECOP
Early Career
Ocean Professionals

**OCEAN DECADE
CONFERENCE 2024**



IMPACT REPORT

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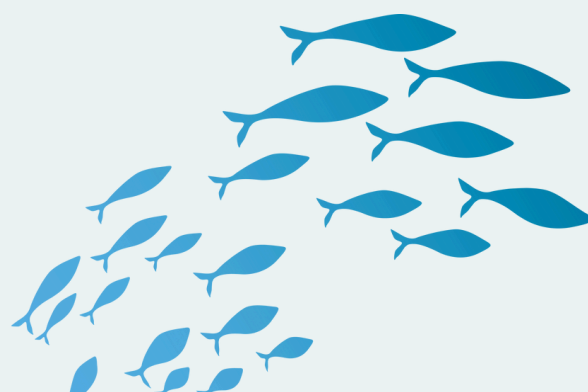
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“ I feel hopeful for the event. We need all aspects of society, [to participate in] science for decision making. ”



“ ECOPs are doing a great job! Just keep doing what you are, and it is already enough. ”



IMPACT REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

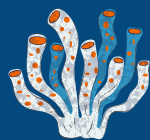
The Ocean Decade Conference was held on 10-12 April 2024 in Barcelona, Spain. This milestone event during the fourth year of the UN Ocean Decade was hosted by the Government of Spain, and co-organized by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (IOC-UNESCO). The ECOP Programme was endorsed as one of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development programmes in June 2021. Our mission is to support ECOPs in their capacity development and work by providing meaningful networking, training, professional development, funding opportunities and creating capacity for cooperation and knowledge exchange. Our structure includes 50+ regional and national nodes, 5 thematic task teams, and 11 endorsed projects from the Calls for Decade Actions.

The ECOP Programme aims to integrate ECOPs into high level decision-making and transformative ocean science, drawing on the vast networking opportunities within the Ocean Decade Framework. Participating in the conference was an important and timely opportunity for the ECOP Programme to present work on capacity development conducted over the last 3 years.

The conference was considered a key event for the ECOP Programme core team, who work remotely, as it was the first time many coordinators could meet in person, and therefore served as an important step forward in team-building. It was also a chance to liaise with members, peers, partners, mentors, and potential funders.

The ECOP Programme has compiled this impact report to document the ECOP Programme's contribution to the Ocean Decade Conference, as well as provide novel insights into how ECOPs experienced the conference. The report starts with an introduction to the conference, and is then split into four parts; ECOP attendance, engagement, feedback, and concluding with outcomes. It features a combination of survey results, event reports, and testimonials.

We hope the conclusion and recommendations will help guide further inclusion, participation and integration of ECOPs in future Ocean Decade events. Acknowledgment and thanks go to IOC-UNESCO and NORAD as main funders of the ECOP Programme.



THE OCEAN DECADE CONFERENCE



INTRODUCTION

The Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona was a pivotal event dedicated to advancing the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030). This global initiative aims to foster scientific knowledge, technology, and partnerships to ensure the sustainable management of our ocean and marine resources. The conference served as a platform for scientists, policymakers, industry leaders, and civil society to collaborate, share insights, and drive action towards achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 14, which focuses on “Life below water”.

Hosted by the Government of Spain, alongside IOC-UNESCO, additional event partners included the Government of Catalonia and Barcelona City Council, Barcelona Capital Nàutica Foundation, and the Spanish National Ocean Decade Committee, which is led by the Ministry of Science and Innovation through the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC). The Conference brought together 1,500 members of the global Ocean Decade community to gain important traction towards delivering **“the science we need, for the ocean we want”**.



Held in the vibrant city of Barcelona, over 3 full days, the conference featured a diverse range of sessions, including keynote speeches, panel discussions, workshops, and interactive exhibits. These activities addressed the full range of Ocean Decade Challenges and critical issues such as marine biodiversity, climate change impacts on the ocean, sustainable fisheries, natural hazards, marine pollution, and the role of innovative technologies in ocean research. The conference was also part of a wider initiative called Ocean Decade Week, designed to engage the local community, tourists, and audiences beyond the conference walls (which we cover on [page 7](#)).

3 DAYS

1,500 PARTICIPANTS

FROM 124 COUNTRIES

3,000 ONLINE VIEWERS

**PLENARY AND PARALLEL SESSIONS
ON THE 10 DECADE CHALLENGES**

**REVIEWING DRAFTS OF
THE 10 WHITE PAPERS**

1 STATEMENT



CONFERENCE OUTCOMES

By bringing together a wide array of stakeholders, the Ocean Decade Conference aimed to accelerate the development of ocean science solutions that contribute to the health, resilience, and sustainability of our ocean for future generations.



Credit: © UNESCO

The Conference also delivered the first drafts of the Vision 2030 white papers, a participatory approach, consolidated by the 10 working groups (for each challenge), designed to set joint priorities for the future and enhance collective impact in the direction of the Decade's Outcomes.

The main outcome of the event was the Barcelona Statement, which identifies priority areas for action for the Ocean Decade in the coming years.

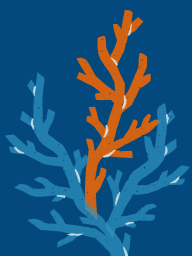
This comprehensive declaration outlines the commitments, strategies, and collaborative efforts necessary to advance the Ocean Decade within the 2030 timeframe, and maintain momentum towards tackling the Challenges and reaching the proposed Outcomes of the Ocean Decade.

The statement encapsulates the collective resolve of global stakeholders, including scientists, policymakers, industry leaders, and civil society, to address the critical challenges facing our global ocean and to promote sustainable ocean governance.

THE BARCELONA STATEMENT

“priority cross-cutting issues to ensure that the Ocean Decade is on track for success by 2030 includes:

Capacity development, sharing, and coordination with a focus on SIDS, Least Developed Countries, and other under-represented groups including Early Career Ocean Professionals.”



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BARCELONA STATEMENT

- **Enhancing Ocean Science and Knowledge:** The statement emphasizes the need for co-designing and co-delivering ocean science to better understand the global distribution and impacts of marine pollution, including its effects on human health and ecosystem integrity.
- **Establishing the "Cities with the Ocean" Platform:** This new initiative aims to mobilize coastal cities and ports to address ocean challenges such as tsunamis, pollution, and climate impacts. The platform will support these cities with programs tailored to their needs, such as enhancing tsunami readiness and collecting critical scientific data.
- **Developing a Decade Collaborative Centre in Barcelona:** The Barcelona City Council and Port of Barcelona committed to creating a center focused on the blue economy. This centre will promote sustainable economic activities related to the ocean and support innovation and technology development in this sector.
- **Inclusive and Equitable Ocean Science:** The statement underscores the need to include diverse voices, particularly Indigenous knowledge holders, women, and youth, in ocean science. It also stresses the importance of geographical balance by developing and strengthening scientific capacity in under-resourced regions, exemplified by new funding opportunities for Africa and Small Island Developing States.
- **Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships:** The statement calls for enhanced collaboration between public and private sectors to drive innovation and create sustainable solutions for ocean management; with particular focus on engaging with the health sector.
- **Expanding Ocean Literacy:** The Barcelona Statement highlights the critical role of ocean literacy in engaging all sectors of society. It advocates for improved communication strategies to raise awareness and educate the public about ocean issues, aiming to integrate ocean science into broader educational curricula.





OCEAN DECADE WEEK

Building on the spirit of the conference, Ocean Decade Week ran from 8-12 April as a way to engage with the general public outside of the conference venue. Off-site satellite events and cultural activities were organized to celebrate ocean heritage and raise awareness about marine conservation, as well as attempt to bridge the gap from science to citizenship.

More than 120 Satellite Events took place across 20 venues throughout Barcelona in the two days leading up to the Conference, and continued throughout the week.

The events were located in four main hubs with a strong link to ocean science and solutions. This allowed for the showcasing of prominent ocean science and blue economy related venues throughout the city. There was an array of exhibitions, panel discussions, interactive workshops or dialogues, film screenings, and music concerts; as well as community beach cleanups.



Photo credit: © Eva Parey
“The Our Ocean from Space” by Fiorella Coliolo and Benoit Delplanque, was co-produced by UNESCO and ESA, with support from Mercator Ocean International, the Italian Space Agency (ASI), the French Space Agency (CNES), the Institut Cartogràfic i Geològic de Catalunya (ICGC), Planetek Italia, the Centro Euro-Mediterraneo sui Cambiamenti Climatici (CMCC), the French National Hydrographic Service (SHOM) and the Maldives Space Research Organisation (MSRO).

By involving diverse stakeholders, and including the general public, the event aimed to build a broad-based movement for ocean sustainability. Ocean Decade Week in Barcelona catalyzed efforts to enhance ocean science and governance, whilst leaving no one behind.

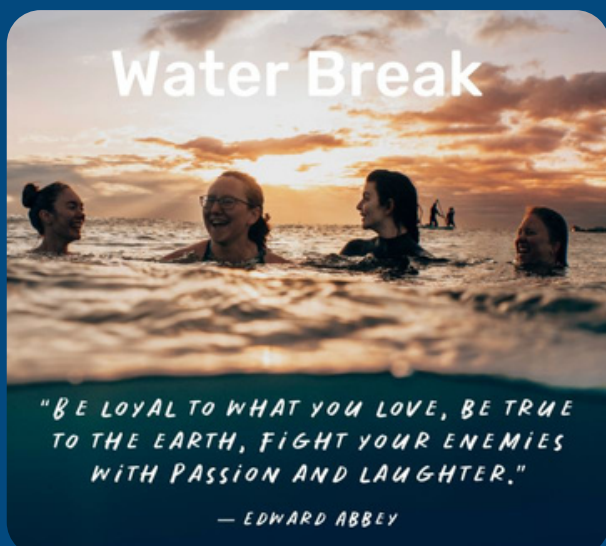
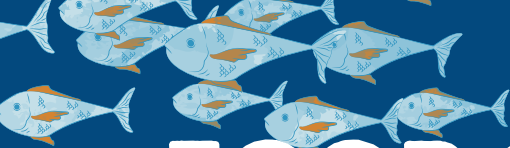


Photo credit: © Luke Hosty
Seatrees, Finisterre and Protect Blue partnered up to deliver complimentary stand up paddleboard sessions for conference goers in Barcelona Bay. As an Endorsed Ocean Decade Activity, the Water Breaks team advocates for “blue mind” and their activity encourages and supports people to get into the water as a way to relax and recharge, as well as provides a way to connect with each other in the environment everyone is working to protect.



ECOP SURVEYS

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.”

At the time of releasing this report, the ECOP Programme currently has over 6000 ECOPs in the global registry, which is a secure database containing an up to date list of ECOPs in our network. People can sign up either directly through Regional or National coordinators, via the [newsletter sign-up form](#) on the ECOP Programme website homepage, or their details are passed on through the [Ocean Decade Network \(ODN\)](#).

IMPACT REPORTING

This Impact Report has been compiled thanks to the ECOP Programme community members who were willing to share their information and reflections with us. We appreciate their time and input in order for us to gather, collate, and interpret their data.

The results come from two informal Google Forms survey questionnaires distributed to the ECOP Programme network before and after the Ocean Decade Conference. They were distributed through the newsletter, WhatsApp group for conference attendees, and social media channels.

SURVEY 1: PRE CONFERENCE 45 respondents

In March 2024, we asked ECOPs to register their interest in attending the UN Ocean Decade Conference. At this point, it was still not clear if everyone interested in attending had received confirmation or funding to attend, although the satellite events had been confirmed by this point. This survey was conducted to understand who would be attending, where from, in what expertise/specialist area, with which partners, and what barriers they were facing to attend.



SURVEY 2: POST CONFERENCE 43 respondents

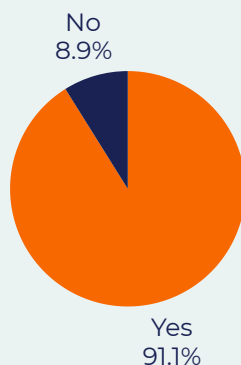
The second survey was distributed to the ECOP community after the Conference, on 16 April 2024. It was open for 4 weeks. We collected both qualitative and quantitative data on a variety of topics, including: level of involvement in the conference, benefits of attending, and financial support.

PART 1: ATTENDANCE

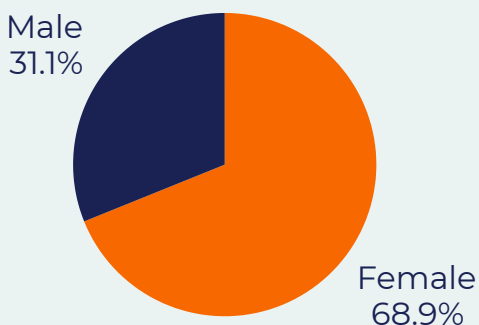
In our [previous Impact Report for the 2022 UN Ocean Conference \(UNOC\) in Lisbon, Portugal](#), we documented that 7% of our global ECOP registry attended UNOC. However, this is very hard to verify, as we are only judging it by the number of people who filled in our survey. It is the same for this year's event; 45 people filled in survey 1 (giving permission to use their data), yet it is difficult to know exactly how many ECOPs attended the Ocean Decade Conference, or how many of our global registry members were present. However, the ECOP Programme started a WhatsApp group on 4 March 2024, as a way to facilitate networking, meeting arrangements, and support during Ocean Decade Week. As of 11 June, 2024, it comprised 145 members. We will use this number as a minimum reference number for ECOPs in attendance in Barcelona.

RESULTS OF SURVEY 1

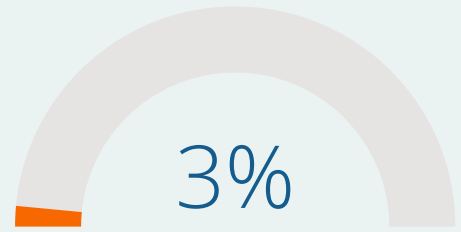
Are you an Early Career Ocean Professional?



What gender do you identify with?



NUMBER OF ECOPS FROM THE GLOBAL REGISTRY AT THE CONFERENCE



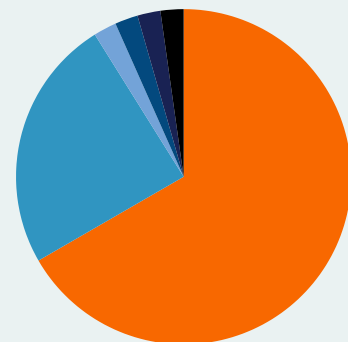
Only 3% of the 4,635 ECOPs on the Global Registry (at the time of survey) attended the Ocean Decade Conference (taken from the WhatsApp group total: n=145).

NUMBER OF ECOPS AT THE CONFERENCE, COMPARED TO ALL ATTENDEES



Based on the number of WhatsApp group members, ECOPs made up approximately 10% of the conference attendees (N=1,500 in total).

Are you definitely attending Ocean Decade Week in Barcelona?



- Yes, definitely 66.7%
- It depends - on funding 24.4%
- It depends - on something else 2.2%
- Yes, but I am not registered 2.2%
- I am joining online 2.2%
- Other (invitation letter) 2.2%

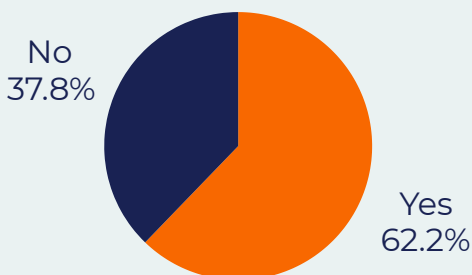
PART 1: ATTENDANCE

Where are you from?

✔ A tick indicates the respondents who answered “yes definitely” to the previous question (“Are you definitely attending Ocean Decade Week in Barcelona?”). No tick means they did not confirm their attendance.



Are you directly involved with the ECOP Programme? And if yes, how?



ECOP members from ECOP Spain, ECOP USA and ECOP Canada

ECOP national node coordinator: Belgium, USA, Germany, South Africa, Brazil, Bangladesh, UK, Mozambique

ECOP regional node coordinator: Caribbean

ECOP node steering committee member: USA, UK

ECOP task team member: Training & Mentoring

Founding ECOP chairperson

Ocean Literacy Hub: Asia

ECOP intern

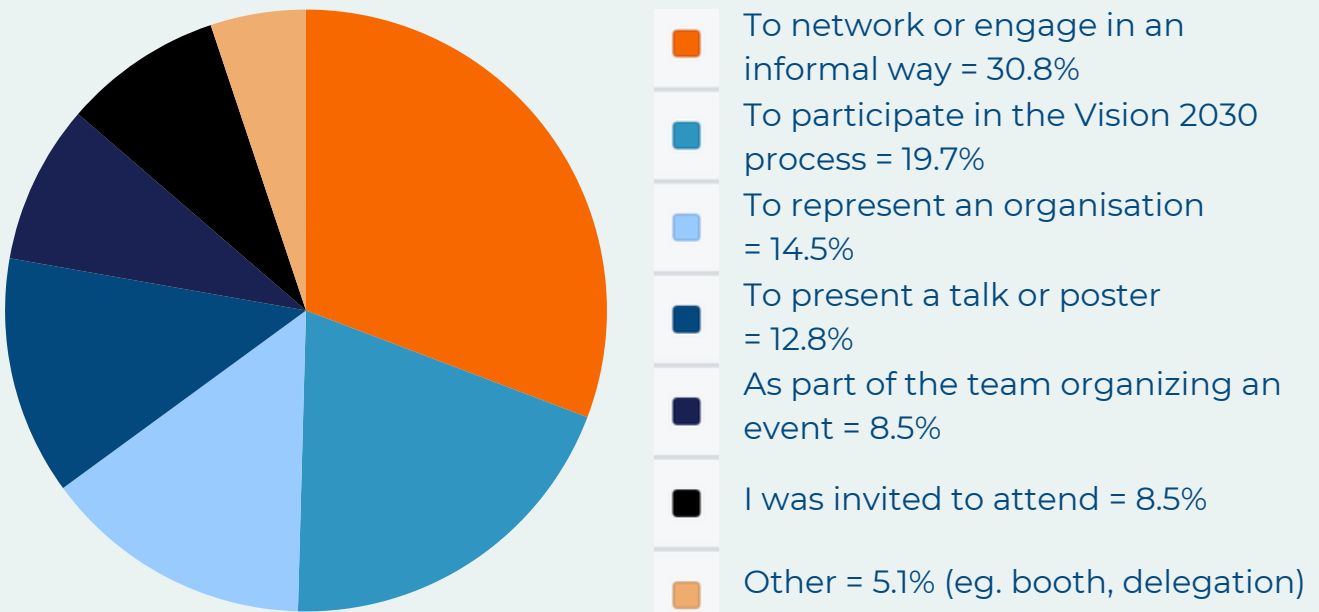


PART 1: ATTENDANCE

My poster was selected, but I wasn't.

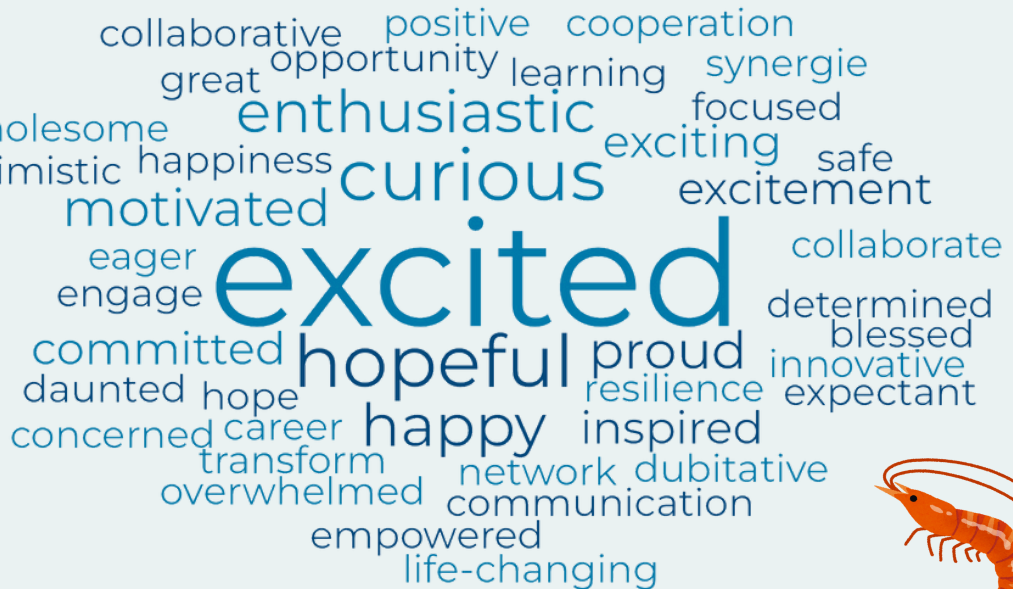
I'm eager to participate in the Ocean Decade event, contingent upon securing funding. My work with the fishing communities in my country significantly affects not only their livelihoods but also the health and sustainability of ocean resources. Attending this event and engaging in ECOP activities would be a vital opportunity to contribute further to ocean conservation efforts and share valuable insights from our community-based initiatives.

Why are you attending?



How do you feel about attending?

I'm attending via virtual platform due to inability to secure funding.



PART 1: ATTENDANCE

What events are you part of?

Scaling up global ocean action and innovation through intergenerational collaboration to bridge science gaps – Knowledge sharing with SIDS, LDCs, ECOPs and Youth.

I will be a panelist in the side event co-organized by OASIS and SOLAS "Unifying strategies to develop integrated global air-sea community networks" at the Mediatric Auditorium. The event will be a panel discussion and is open to everyone!

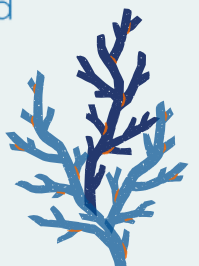
Panelist for: Engaging Youth Under 25: A Model of Success.

My oral presentation is happening during the parallel session of Challenge 4, Session 2: Science and Solutions for a Sustainable and Resilient Ocean entitled "Strategic measures for blue economy sectors within Marine Protected Areas to support ecosystem-based management in Marine Spatial Planning". My poster will be shown at the coffee break space in the CCIB.

Connecting the world around Ocean Prediction: A vision for the Decade and Beyond.

IOCARIBE event: Ocean Decade in the Tropical Americas.

What is your Ocean area of expertise/interest?



PART 1: ATTENDANCE



I am doing postdoc research at University of Barcelona, I would like to attend the event but don't have an invitation letter, I don't need a ticket because I am here already.

I will be there and am hoping to make this most out of the satellite events, but I would love to go to the actual conference.



ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Thanks to the respondents who filled in this initial survey, we were able to get an idea of who will be attending the event, where they are from, and why. We learnt that there would be more women than men potentially attending, and whilst over 60% of respondents knew they would definitely be attending, 24% were waiting for funding to be confirmed, or weren't sure due to funding. ECOPs from over 30 countries responded, including four with dual residency or multiple citizenships (and identities), which is a key point for understanding this generation and the complexity of some individuals' backgrounds.

We can see that 30.8% of ECOPs were planning to attend in an informal way, yet 64.1% of respondents would be participating in the event either through satellite events, as a speaker or even as an invitee.

The feelings that the conference evoked in respondents were overall very positive, although "daunted" and "dubitative" were also there. However, "excited" was by-far the most popular response, followed by "hopeful", "curious", and "enthusiastic". "Life-changing" even made it in. Finally, we discovered that a majority of respondents are working in the specific fields of ocean literacy and the blue economy, with the Indian Ocean being another popular area of expertise.

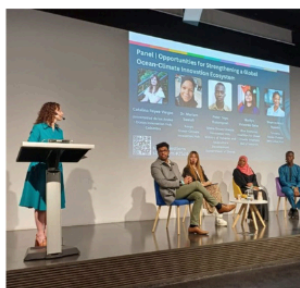


PART 2: ECOP EVENTS



The call for proposals to host satellite events during Ocean Decade Week closed on 30 October 2023. At this point the ECOP Programme submitted 5 separate proposals, at the global level, and was successful in all applications. Due to the nature of the event, and its aim to nurture collaborative partnerships within the Ocean Decade framework, as well as time constraints, organizations were grouped together in order to develop and deliver events of similar themes together. Below we provide summaries of the five events that the ECOP Programme co-organized and co-hosted before and during the Conference.

I learned that I need to share my story more. There are many other ECOPS who resonated with parts of my story. I felt a sense of global community. I also learned that I have privilege to have been able to afford to attend the conference and that so many other ECOPS weren't able to.



EVENT 1:
8 APRIL 2024

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

55 APPROX.
PARTICIPANTS

This satellite event titled “**Capacity Development for the Ocean We Want: Exploring Science Communication and Solving Global Capacity Development Challenges**” was designed to find innovative and efficient solutions to address specific challenges related to capacity development/sharing.

MEET THE PRESENTERS

TIAGO GARCIA



Tiago is Communication Officer at +ATLANTIC CoLAB and his talk questioned how we can change the narrative within science communication. He challenged the audience to think outside the box when sharing research and used the example of PROJETO19 as a way to engage Youth in Ocean Science.

COSMIN CHIVU



Cosmin, as Project Officer for International Ocean Institute HQ in Malta, shared how the impact and continuity of the IOI's Capacity Building Programmes are creating global Ocean leadership and empowering ECOPs, especially for those from developing countries.

CONOR SAVAGE



Conor, Training and Mentoring Task Team Manager for the ECOP Programme, presented “How to reach out and communicate science to non-academic audiences”. His guidance for reaching “non expert” audiences included the art of passionate storytelling to draw people into the topic.

The event aimed to provide an **inclusive, international and intersectoral** atmosphere for **impactful and meaningful collaboration and knowledge-exchange**.

Introductions were followed by three compelling and thought-provoking presentations from the guest speakers, and the room was organized into groups for an interactive and action-oriented mini-hackathon. This facilitated session provided **opportunity for networking among participants from diverse backgrounds whilst brainstorming about specific challenges related to capacity development**. The focus was on providing Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs) with opportunities to **develop practical skills and tools** that they can use in their careers, by **solving ‘real world’ challenges**.



Organizing partners:



Venue: Institut de Ciències del Mar (ICM) - CSIC, Barcelona.

HACKATHON

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

GROUP 1 SCENARIO:

As organizers of a rather small scientific conference/meeting focused on SDG14: Life Below Water, describe how you would invite and engage with more diverse stakeholders, such as business owners, media, ports authorities, oil and gas companies and shipping companies. How would you meet their needs, whilst trying to encourage cross-sector dialogues within the blue economy?

THE GROUP CAME UP WITH THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

- **Try to align the conference with the agenda(s) of the participants**
- **Determine the conference's value proposition (this might be different for different stakeholder groups), and try to**
- **Provide opportunities for promotion (expo, sponsorships, branded items)**



GROUP 2 SCENARIO:

In order to advance your career and gain access to new professional opportunities, it is important for you to attend workshops and conferences in your field. What networks, websites, institutions, etc do you rely on to find funding? What could be done to make the process of finding funding opportunities easier?

THE GROUP CAME UP WITH THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

- **Hold more conferences in the Global South**
- **Create a centralized, searchable platform that lists funding opportunities**
- **Ideally should be searchable by region, topic**
- **Funding should help empower local communities to receive more knowledge and skills**



GROUP 3 SCENARIO:

Complex Ocean issues such as those related to sustainable development, climate change and environmental management and planning are characterized by high uncertainties about the research agenda, tools, choices and solutions to adopt, and the impacts these choices may have on different components of socio-ecological systems. What gaps can you identify right now in the available capacity development, education and training offerings in the Ocean sector?

THE GROUP CAME UP WITH THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

- **Inadequate training on interdisciplinary topics and crosscutting themes in ocean conservation; as well as resource mobilization and funding**
- **Limited recognition and inclusion of the local and indigenous knowledge**
- **Inadequate multidirectional partnerships i.e. exchange programmes where underrepresented and well-represented ECOPs learn from each other**
- **Limited accessibility, sharing and transfer of technical skills, software, ocean data and information among various resource users**



Through focused and moderated workgroups during this event, concrete suggestions and actionable recommendations were provided within the Ocean Decade framework. Mini-hackathons facilitate the development of practical skills and tools among ECOPs and the session included in the event **evidenced how a supportive environment for peer-to-peer exchanges and learning is extremely valuable for promoting robust capacity development and shared knowledge in the ocean sector.**



CO-HOSTS AND FACILITATORS

**EVENT 2:
9 APRIL 2024**

DIVING FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL OCEAN LITERACY:

150 APPROX. PARTICIPANTS

EXPLORING, SHARING, AND DEVELOPING SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES TO KNOW, FEEL AND JOIN THE LIVING OCEAN

This satellite event took a deep dive into global to local success stories, showcasing a wide range of innovative ocean literacy initiatives. A collection of special guests were invited to share their solutions in overcoming challenges, as well as the best practices. Four interactive panels were designed to explore the lived experiences of project coordinators across diverse sectors: Removing Barriers for Ocean Literacy, Ocean Literacy in Local Communities, Ocean Literacy in Science, and Ocean Literacy & Water Sports.

This event was co-organized and co-hosted by 14 partners. The introductions set the intentions for the event and provided guidance in generating the outcomes of this collaborative effort.



MEET THE CO-HOSTS



Maria Vittoria Marra
Galway Atlantaquaria National Aquarium of Ireland



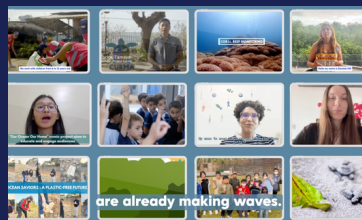
Begoña Vendrell-Simón
Escola Galí Bellesguard, Universitat de Barcelona



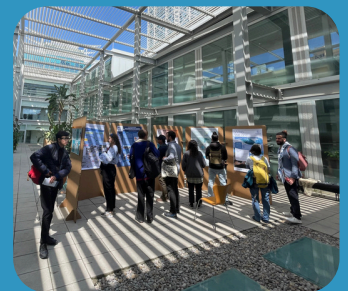
Evgeniia Kostianaia
Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOP) Programme

THE OCEAN LITERACY SERIES

Prior to the panels, a short film was screened by the ECOP Programme's Ocean Literacy Task Team and the Ocean Literacy Asia Hub to share success stories from around the globe. Through this series, the aim is to showcase innovative practices from diverse regions and methods of fostering collaboration among people and institutions worldwide, to help inspire and provide guidance for emerging ocean literacy projects. The series ensures representation from many corners of the world, featuring stories in local languages and leveraging local resources.



**POSTER DISPLAY
COURTESY OF INSTITUT DE CIÈNCIES DEL MAR (CSIC).**



Venue: Institut de Ciències del Mar (ICM) - CSIC, Barcelona



OCEAN LITERACY EVENT

REMOVING BARRIERS FOR ADDRESSING OCEAN LITERACY GLOBALLY

Removing barriers is crucial to fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of marine environments yet challenges such as financial constraints, limited access to educational resources and cultural barriers can hinder effective communication and engagement with diverse communities.

This panel highlighted innovative approaches, such as citizen science projects and local community engagement efforts, able to bridge gaps in knowledge and empower individuals to actively participate in ocean conservation, by removing these barriers. The panelists emphasized the critical role of funding in supporting marine education initiatives, they suggested local solutions for global challenges; with Guardians of the Blue and the IOI Ocean Academy highlighting the importance of culturally relevant and locally anchored approaches to address such challenges. Oceanogami and Turquoise Ecology highlighted the significance of engaging diverse stakeholders, including the private sector, policymakers, and decision-makers, in marine conservation efforts. The panelists discussed innovative methodologies such as the ESRA methodology, which effectively measures the internalization of ocean literacy concepts within coastal communities and explored strategies to overcome language barriers, enhance the visibility of ocean literacy efforts, and address generational gaps. Through innovative approaches, collaboration, and inclusivity, the panel discussed how these initiatives are empowering individuals to actively participate in ocean conservation and safeguard our oceans for future generations.



PANEL 1

Moderator



KARINA HIGA



ALICIA PEREZ-PORRO



ANTONELLA VASSALLO



LAURA KHATIB



PATRICIA PUIG



DANIELA HILL



YOLANDA SANCHEZ

PANEL 2



OCEAN LITERACY IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

There is still much to improve about ocean literacy, as well as overcoming the challenge of communicating about it. The panelists emphasized the relevance of communication and working closely with communities and local networks in order to improve ocean literacy. Providing direct contact with the ocean was regarded as a positive way of not only communicating but of building a more positive human-ocean relationship.

It was agreed that knowledge, not only theoretical but also practical, and not only scientific but also traditional should be enhanced. Listening to all the different voices within local communities is challenging but necessary. Stakeholders, users of the ocean and citizens in general may have different conceptions, beliefs and perceptions of the ocean and although may face similar issues, the best solution will always depend on the stakeholders involved, and consensus should be sought. Citizen engagement can be encouraged through the use of diagnostic methodologies that highlight cultural backgrounds and personal relationships with the ocean, and endorsing participatory processes is particularly beneficial to all parties. The panelists commented on the importance of getting to know the ocean, in a real context, to establish a bond which may prelude caring about it deeply. Moreover, common “users” are proving to be active guardians of the sea and powerful ocean literacy agents. However, the lack of contact with the ocean is still a heavy load even in coastal cities, as much of society lives far from it (in mind and proximity). We should emphasize the wonder and awe of the sea, in its broadest sense. Also, and linked to the previous highlight, knowing what most impacts our emotions may provide the necessary motivation to bring forth engagement and healthy relationships with the ocean.



NOEMÍ FUSTER



BEATRIZ PATRACA



JOSEPH MENDOZA



MAR, ARNAU, BERTA, ADA AND CANDELA



EMILIO BELADIEZ

STUDENTS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF BARCELONA

Moderator

OCEAN LITERACY EVENT

OCEAN LITERACY IN SCIENCE

PANEL 3



Ocean science is often viewed as a difficult field that is accessible only to researchers that are used to specialized concepts and techniques, using the so-called scientific method. This session discussed challenges and solutions related to ocean literacy in the context of ocean research.

Ocean literacy holds enormous strategic potential to promote the relevance of science for society and policy development. It is a key tool to engage not just the public, but also scientists, youth, stakeholders, policy, and funding agencies and is possible to integrate scientific and creative perspectives as well as traditional knowledge. Yet, ocean literacy activities tend to be underfunded and suffer from the lack of impact assessment and long-term planning. This panel emphasised multi- and cross-disciplinary approaches to strengthening engagement in science and questioned the notions of knowledge in the modern world. Creativity, philosophy, sociology, and behaviour sciences should all be considered in the context of ocean literacy. The discussion addressed the pursuit of ocean intelligence which should include qualitative aspects beyond purely quantitative scientific methods. Traditional and non-traditional approaches, from mythology to artificial intelligence, can provide meaningful ways to reconnect public with the environment and marine knowledge.

Moderator



JOSEP LLUIS PELEGRI LLOPART



DINA EPARKHINA



CARMEN GARCIA



DONATA CANU



SILVIA GOMEZ

PANEL 4



OCEAN LITERACY AND WATER SPORTS

This panel included four advocates of ocean literacy in sports, sharing their four very different projects across scuba diving, sailing and stand-up paddle boarding. Through their initiatives they enable ocean users to understand the ocean ecosystem on a much deeper level, and incorporate ocean literacy learning into their activities and impact. The panel featured projects taking place globally, regionally, locally, as well as online.

The discussion began by looking at the culture of professional sports and how this can be a huge opportunity to help shift the focus towards collaboration and collective action for the ocean. “The Ocean Race” has invested heavily into a comprehensive ocean literacy program, providing resources for schools, and been developed into 11 languages, in 80 different countries, with over 250,000 students participating - an example of how designing projects with scaling up in mind can increase impact. “Surfing for Science” showcases how using different tools to engage ocean users in marine citizen science, can utilize their marine citizenship and contribute to data collection. “Buceo Conciencia” is committed to transforming the consciousness of divers, as their research found divers wanted to participate in marine citizen science but felt they didn’t have enough knowledge. An online platform was developed to teach them about marine biology. The “TransforMAR” Project is highlighting intersectoral barriers inherent in water sports, tackling accessibility barriers through funded diving programmes, and helping increase equitable participation of youth communities in Brazil who are particularly vulnerable in the face of climate change impacts. The panel concluded that by utilising the access sports have to the wider and broader audiences, the message of ocean literacy could reach the masses - that we are all connected to the ocean in one way or another.



LUCY HUNT



ANNA SANCHEZ-VIDAL



MAIBE HERMOSO



GIOVANNA SCAGNOLATTO



NATALIE FOX

Moderator



MEMBERS OF THE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

The full event was live-streamed, and the recording can be found [here](#). The organizers are currently working together to develop further ways to increase the impact and disseminate the outcomes of the event to a broader audience.

**EVENT 3:
9 APRIL 2024**

“THE INCLUSIVITY WE NEED FOR THE OCEAN WE WANT”

**75 APPROX.
PARTICIPANTS**

This co-hosted satellite event aimed to **identify the systemic barriers that lead to the exclusion of underrepresented groups and communities**, thus **preventing true inclusivity in ocean conservation and governance**. It was exploring this key theme using two lenses (and panels) on **geopolitical** and **intersectorial** inclusivity.

SHORT FILM SCREENING

The event began with an 8 minute film, showing a compilation of interviews with members of coastal communities from the Global South. Participants were asked about the biggest challenges they are currently facing or likely to face, and if they had a message they would like to share. The film was a call to the rest of the world to respect and value these voices when discussing the future of our shared ocean (the photos below are a few of those featured).



Malaysia Sierra Leone Honduras El Salvador Costa Rica Brazil India



The full series, which includes 13 interviews with participants from the countries listed above, can be accessed here: www.ecopdecade.org/voices-from-the-ocean.

After the introductions and short film, the interactive element in the form of Slido was launched, giving audience members, in person and online, the opportunity, and encouragement, to participate.

The panels were organized to discuss concrete ways to include and amplify the voices of underrepresented groups in high-level national and international fora, spanning from nations in the Global North and the Global South.



Venue: Barcelona Capital Nàutica, Barcelona.



PANEL 1

GEOPOLITICAL INCLUSIVITY

This panel featured speakers from underrepresented geopolitical regions, highlighting barriers to their participation in global ocean events and efforts to tackle Ocean Decade Challenges. The discussion underscored structural obstacles that perpetuate existing inequalities that persist in the international ocean community. The main challenges of geopolitically underrepresented voices that the panelists and participants drew attention to were: economic limitations to attend events, political marginalization due to global political issues, and no access to data from their regions.



Xochitl Elías



As moderator

Laura Khatib



Lebanon

Sheyla Ravelo Perez



Cuba

Khushboo Jhugroo



Mauritius

Ilena Zanella



Costa Rica

PANEL 2

INTERSECTORAL INCLUSIVITY

This panel represented different sectors in relation to the ocean, and discussed how bringing a variety of stakeholders “to the table” in order to work towards a common objective is an opportunity to practice inclusivity in action. However, to achieve the Ocean Decade Outcomes and SDG14 targets, all sectors must realize the bigger picture - which may take time. Time is also money, therefore new avenues of funding need to be made available. Integrating and co-creating projects with vulnerable communities is an inclusive way to tackle ocean issues, yet reframing the vulnerable as resilient is a way to show respect and encourage more equal partnerships.



Allan Krelling



Research

Antonella Vassallo



Policy & Education

Herland Cerveaux



Private Industry

Laura Meyer



Law/Engineering

Laura Hernandez Merlano



As moderator

The panelists and attendants of this event proposed several key recommendations:

- a) Changing the location of future events, such as International Conferences, to more accessible areas for both the Global North and South,
 - b) Ensuring timely responses about acceptance to conference participants should be a priority, in order to allow enough time for people from both the Global North and South to obtain visas;
 - c) Decentralizing communication with coastal communities,
 - d) Providing more options in funding requirements that do not marginalize certain communities, countries, and regions,
 - e) Creating greater incentives and opportunities for intersectoral solutions to intersectional problems,
 - f) Ensuring communities are core beneficiaries when transitioning to circularity, and
 - g) Designing solutions through collaboration across various sectors and lived experiences.
- These proposals aim to enhance inclusivity, accessibility, and effective problem-solving.



THE EVENT ORGANIZERS AND GUEST SPEAKERS

Watch the full livestream recording: <https://youtu.be/gaYAo5ZwoDg>

EVENT 4:
9 APRIL 2024

GATHERING FORCES FOR SCIENCE-POLICY NEXUS, INNOVATION AND FUNDING

**50 APPROX.
PARTICIPANTS**

This satellite event was led by the ECOP Programme and Deep Ocean Stewardship Initiative (DOSI) and presented by a team of partner organizations: Nippon Foundation - University of Edinburgh Ocean Voices Programme, Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology (IMarEST), International Marine Center and Sustainable Ocean Alliance. The event provided a dynamic platform for participants to engage with leading experts on key topics for Early Career Ocean Professionals, and served to illustrate some barriers ECOPs encounter, to discuss these barriers, and then foster collaborative and innovative solutions for positive change; finding entry-points into the science-to-policy interface and the startup market.

Introduction to DOSI from Maila Guilhon

Maila gave a introduction to the Deep Ocean Stewardship Initiative (DOSI), a global network of experts which integrates science, technology, policy, law and economics to advise on ecosystem-based management of resource use in the deep ocean, and on strategies to maintain the integrity of deep-ocean ecosystems within and beyond national jurisdiction. She invited participants to join the network and take the open survey.



Link to the survey:
<https://deepseacops.org/survey-english/>
Available in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish.

The event was split into two panels and included an array of speakers (policymakers, scientists, innovators and industry leaders) to provide multifaceted insights on the key topics of science-policy nexus, innovation and funding.



The panels brought together subject matter experts and industry leaders to explore these in an open and inclusive manner, through structured questions and back-and-forth conversations. Using Slido platform, the audience was encouraged to engage in the discussion and moderators were able to obtain feedback from them in real time.



**Venue: Barcelona
Capital Nàutica,
Barcelona.**





The main outcomes of this panel included:

- 1) shared insights about the challenges faced by early career professionals, specifically from deep-sea scientists, and showcased opportunities for ECOPs to be more engaged in the science to policy interface;
- 2) provided information on possible initiatives and programmes to enhance the participation of ECOPs in international negotiations. These include the Ocean Voices Programme Nippon Foundation and Deep Ocean Stewardship Initiative (DOSI);
- 3) shared the [questionnaire](#) to directly assess the aspirations, challenges, and needs of Early Career Ocean Professionals, in engaging in policy-making at all levels; and help evaluate DOSI's current support for ECOPs in these processes.

MODERATOR:
Mariana Caldeira



Amelia Bridges



PANELISTS:
Ana Hilario



Mariana Andrade



PANEL 2

FUNDING AND RESOURCES



This panel shared experience of their journey in securing funding for their ventures or organizations; discussed key challenges and requirements for funding, provided advice for individuals starting their own company, reflected on their own funding failures and lessons learnt.

- Key outcomes were:
- 1) shared knowledge and learnings on funding in the start-up and innovation fields, through which the participants gained a deeper understanding of current funding challenges for start-ups and organizations, and potential solutions;
 - 2) promoted networking to encourage meaningful connections among attendees and panelists, fostering potential future collaborations.

Leandro Angelo Pereira



PANELISTS:
Adriana Ruiz Kyvik



Anastasiia Varlygina



MODERATOR:
Evgeniia Kostianaia



The event also showcased several products from B'zeos - a green tech company, founded by one of the panelists, Adriana Ruiz Kyvik, which is unlocking the power of seaweed to develop seaweed based packaging. After hearing Adriana's journey from student to ocean tech entrepreneur, it was helpful to understand the whole process of getting a product to market.



Event outcomes:

The outcomes of this event are related to Challenge 9 of the Ocean Decade and will contribute to obtaining knowledge, resources or infrastructure, partnerships, capacity development, technology solutions and infrastructure required to achieve the objectives of the Ocean Decade by 2030.



EVENT 5:
12 APRIL 2024

BUILDING OCEAN LEADERSHIP

80 APPROX.
PARTICIPANTS

This satellite event was co-organized by the ECOP Programme and Edinburgh Ocean Leaders (EOL), along with additional partners, and designed to explore key themes of navigating career paths across from early to mid-career stages: **Networking, Creativity, and Resilience.**

INTRODUCTIONS BY EDINBURGH OCEAN LEADERS & EARLY CAREER OCEAN PROFESSIONALS PROGRAMME



Jessie Turner and Evgeniia Kostianaia opened the event, representing both organizing parties who had joined together to collaborate and develop the format. Jessie is Executive Director of Ocean Acidification Alliance (OA Alliance) and an Edinburgh Ocean Leader with 15 years of experience working in public policy development, advocacy, and stakeholder engagement. Evgeniia is the Global Coordinator of the UN Ocean Decade endorsed Programme for Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOP Programme).

KEY NOTE SPEAKER: ERIC MARKOWITZ

Executive leadership coach Eric Markowitz kicked off the event with an engaging and interactive presentation especially curated for an audience of ocean professionals. He gave vital insights into effective networking and communication skills, including the capability to create networks and achieve shared goals. His exercises provided opportunities for the audience to interact and practice these methods in real time, and served as an ice breaker to lead into further discussions with the invited panelists. Eric's 20 years experience, and rich background in transforming companies and empowering leaders across Fortune 500 companies, added a broader perspective to the topic of ocean science, igniting the motivation and confidence needed to rise above career hurdles and achieve success.



Founder and CEO of HERO Business Coaching



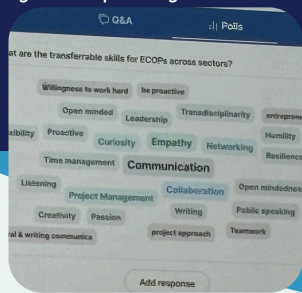
MODERATOR:
Laura Hernandez Merlano



ECOP Canada

INTERACTIVE PANEL SESSION

The moderator for this next part was Laura Hernandez Merlano, ECOP Canada steering committee member, who used her powerful voice to advocate on behalf of those not able to be in the room, and then introduced the panelists to begin the discussion. Laura expertly coordinated the interactive element that allowed for audience participation, whilst the emerging and established ocean leaders shared perspectives, experiences, insights and lessons learnt around the following key topics: Leadership, Networking, Creativity and Resilience. The audience were asked about transferrable skills, of which communication came out on top - followed by collaboration, project management and empathy. Empathy was also highlighted as the most important value for leadership, followed by listening and humility.



Organizing partners:



NETWORKING EVENT

PANELISTS AND PANEL OUTCOMES

The panelists were a mix of emerging leaders across ocean research, academia, education, governance and non-profits; working in international, national and local spheres. They gave their perspectives on the four topics, summarised below.

João Canning-Clode



Edinburgh Ocean Leader

Imogen Napper



Edinburgh Ocean Leader

Yolanda Sánchez



Edinburgh Ocean Leader

Evgeniia Kostianaia



ECOP Programme

Crawford Nimea



Federated States of Micronesia Pacific Islands



- Leadership:** The panelists gave insights into how they developed their leadership skills throughout their early to mid-career stages, and offered advice to emerging professionals seeking to enhance their leadership capabilities in ocean-related fields.
- Networking:** In the realm of ocean-related professions, the panelists shared how networking played a pivotal role in their career journeys, and what strategies they recommend for building meaningful professional connections within the marine science and conservation community.
- Creativity:** The panelists provided examples of innovative solutions or projects they have been involved in, highlighting the role of creativity in driving positive outcomes for the ocean environment.
- Resilience:** Considering the long-term goals of the UN Ocean Decade, the panelists reflected on how they sustain resilience in their commitment to ocean-related work, and offered advice for early career professionals seeking to navigate and persist in this challenging field.

CLOSING REMARKS

Antonella Vassallo is Managing Director of the International Ocean Institute (IOI), at its headquarters in Malta. Her closing remarks wrapped up the event perfectly and she represented a figure of genuine and sustained ocean leadership. Her attention to the words of the keynote speaker, moderator and panelists, and her ability to tap into their key messages, gave the audience further suggestions of how they can approach their own unique journey within the ocean professional route. She encouraged more collaboration and especially, the art of listening, as we move forward into the next stage of the Ocean Decade.

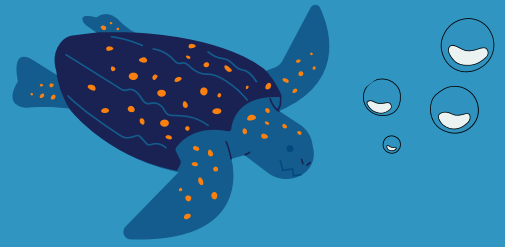
Antonella Vassallo



Event outcomes /Take away reflections:

This event was designed to build an enhanced understanding of career navigation for early to mid-career professionals in the Ocean sector. A key takeaway was the importance of networking that promotes collaboration over competition, supporting diversity, interdisciplinarity, and dialogue. Experiences, insights, and lessons learned from ECOPs and Edinburgh Ocean Leaders were shared, and the panelists openly discussed their strengths, vulnerabilities, training, and interdisciplinary perspectives, providing diverse viewpoints. There was a strong emphasis on developing capacities, talents, and recognition of leadership skills, highlighting how an effective leader can bring change, support, and empower others. Additionally, audience engagement was enabled through discussions and reflections, with interactions facilitated via Slido, and this encouraged a participatory and inclusive approach encapsulated within the whole event.

ECOP POSTERS



The Ocean Decade Conference featured a substantial exhibition area dedicated to selected posters aligned with the conference themes and the Decade framework. This space offered participants an invaluable opportunity to showcase their work, fostering inspiration and promoting further discussion and collaboration. Among the array of posters, those presented by members of the ECOP Programme team highlighted their significant contributions and impactful findings, effectively sharing key insights and enhancing the overall discourse.



COMMS COORDINATOR NATALIE FOX WITH THE POSTER SHE HELPED DESIGN FOR THE UK'S NATIONAL DECADÉ COMMITTEE.

A global comparative analysis of ECOP needs, priorities, and engagement levels within the UN Ocean Decade

Insights from 2022-2024 surveys

Raphael Roman, Evgeniia Kostianala, Gabriel Juma, Ashley Bowes, Anthony Ndash, Xochitl Edua Elias Ilosvay, Juliana Di Filippo Taborada, Chunhua Jiang, Debarati Sengupta, Kotaro Tanaka, Yushi Morioka, Shahadat Hossain, Evonne Tan, Jae-Hyung Park, Bumsoo Kim, Minkyung Kim, Seung-Tae Yoon, Hyung-Gyu Lim, Chanhyung Jeon, Karina Higa, Tecla Maggioni, Inés Más de la Peña, Lucía Millán Agudo, Sara Mohamed Santamaría, Cora Hoerstmann, Laura Meyer, Tristan da Silva e Ornelas, Anabel von Jackowski, Sandra Kethelhake

What is an Early Career Ocean Professional (ECOP)?
An ECOP is a person that self-identifies as being early in their career, with 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.

Background
Over the past two years, 13 multilingual needs-assessment questionnaires have been crafted and disseminated within their geographic scope. The majority of these surveys were co-designed by ECOPs from or living in the region/country of focus, to make sure the content is culturally appropriate while integrating new questions that ECOPs believed were of particular importance to their context. Despite following different structures and narratives, all ECOP surveys remain consistent when it comes to significant topics pertaining to ECOP needs, priorities, and barriers (including funding and capacity development), socio-demographic representation (e.g., gender, discipline, sector, areas of expertise, etc.) and UN Ocean Decade awareness and engagement, thus allowing us to compare them effectively and meaningfully and identify commonalities and discrepancies.

Specifically, three surveys have been circulated at the regional level, covering Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, while another ten have been conducted at the national level, including Bangladesh, Canada, China, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, South Korea and Spain. These multilingual online surveys capture cultural nuances and provide tailored actionable insights, particularly in areas such as funding, awareness-raising, networking and capacity building. While some findings have already been published in reports or presented at international conferences, this is the first time that our team is consolidating this information at the global level. While a global ECOP survey was circulated in 2019/2020 by a first cohort of international ECOPs, this ongoing work intends to follow up on this effort by building upon it and delving further into regional and national contexts.

Legend
Africa Survey N = 192 | Asia surveys (Bangladesh, China, India, Korea, Japan, Malaysia) N = 572 | Canada survey N = 110 | Central America survey N = 35 | Europe surveys (Germany, Italy, Spain) N = 188

Sectors
Research/Science, Government/Policy, Industry/Private sector, NGO/Non-profit, Education/Culture, Foundation/Philanthropy

Engagement Gap
In Asia and Europe, more than 50% of respondents who have heard or read about the UN Ocean Decade never participated in related activities or programs.

Ocean Decade Awareness
Yes: 57%, 83%, 85%, 81%, 78%
No: 43%, 17%, 15%, 19%, 22%

Percentage (%) of respondents selecting each sector and disaggregated by country/region
Lack of professional/social network, Lack of career opportunities, Lack of training & mentorship, Low salary & stability in ocean fields, Language barriers, Gender inequality, Lack of funding, Barriers & Challenges

Which Ocean Decade Outcomes are ECOPs involved in or wish to be?*
Most Cited Outcomes: Ocean Health & Resilient Ocean (69%), A Safe Ocean (67%), A Clean Ocean (47%)
Least Cited Outcomes: A Healthy and Resilient Ocean (3%), A Safe Ocean (3%), A Clean Ocean (3%)

Acknowledgement
Our sincere gratitude goes to the IOC-UNESCO and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation for their financial and organizational support, which has made this work possible.

Scan the QR codes to access the survey reports, visit our website, and subscribe to our newsletter.

unesco | Norad | r.roman@unesco.org | Reports | Website | Newsletter

LEAD AUTHOR RAPHAEL ROMAN, REGIONAL COORDINATOR FOR ASIA, ALONG WITH 28 CO-AUTHORS FROM ACROSS THE GLOBAL ECOP PROGRAMME, COLLATED SURVEY RESULTS FROM ACROSS AFRICA, ASIA, CANADA, CENTRAL AMERICA AND EUROPE COLLECTED AND ANALYSED DURING 2022-2024.

2023 LATIN AMERICAN AND THE CARIBBEAN EARLY CAREER OCEAN PROFESSIONALS SURVEY

Latin American and the Caribbean ECOP Nodes
Brazil | Caribbean | Central America | Mexico

THE EARLY CAREER OCEAN PROFESSIONAL (ECOP) NETWORK PROGRAMME
Endorsed UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development initiative that strengthens the perspectives of emerging ocean professionals by fostering a collective voice and the exchange of knowledge in service of advancing ocean sustainability.

THE LAC SURVEY
Ran for 6 MONTHS June to November 2023

179 VALID RESPONSES
ECOPs original from or residents of the LAC region

4 LANGUAGES
PORTUGUESE (80 PARTICIPANTS), SPANISH (79 PARTICIPANTS), ENGLISH (20 PARTICIPANTS), FRENCH (0 PARTICIPANTS)

16.7% LIVING OUTSIDE THE LAC REGION

27 NATIONALITIES

65 MALES, 112 FEMALES, 2 NON-BINARIES, 1 PREFER NOT TO SAY

CHALLENGES/BARRIERS FACED BY ECOP IN/OF THE LAC REGION
93.3% Inadequate or no funding for research and outreach activities, 88.1% Difficulty finding a job in ocean science, 87.7% Low salary/benefits or no paid activities, 84.6% Lack of research and professional opportunities, 81.1% Lack of a professional network, 81.4% Lack of training and mentorship, 77.6% Gender inequality, 74.6% Political context, 74.0% Economic or family-related problems, 74.0% Insecure workplace, 70.3% Health and/or mental health issues, 70.3% COVID-19 consequences

PRIORITY AREAS FOR CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE LAC REGION
Ocean observation data, monitoring and modelling, Ocean conservation, Fundraising, Outreach and stakeholder engagement, Training and ocean policy, government, law and community, Project management, Teaching and education, Ocean literacy/science communication, Blue economy, Data analysis and SIGs, Language (Spanish/Portuguese), On-board scientific training as courses, diving etc, Ocean engineering, Ocean navigation

INVOLVEMENT IN THE OCEAN DECADÉ EXPECTED RESULTS
AFFECTED OCEAN: 8.8% (ACCIDENTS), 22.8% (WATER QUALITY), 22.8% (WATER QUALITY), 22.8% (WATER QUALITY), 22.8% (WATER QUALITY)
AFFECTED OCEAN: 22.8% (ACCIDENTS), 22.8% (WATER QUALITY), 22.8% (WATER QUALITY), 22.8% (WATER QUALITY)

INVOLVEMENT IN THE OCEAN DECADÉ CHALLENGES
CHALLENGE: 70.3%, 70.3%, 70.3%, 70.3%, 70.3%, 70.3%, 70.3%, 70.3%

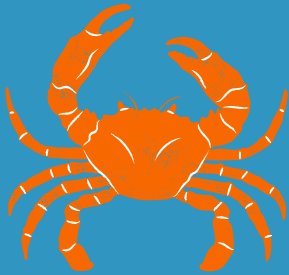
REACH OUT!
www.ecopdecade.org | @ecop_programme

COORDINATORS FROM ECOP BRAZIL, CARIBBEAN, CENTRAL AMERICA AND MEXICO PRESENTED THE RESULTS OF THE LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN SURVEY CONDUCTED IN 2023.

ECOP POSTERS



NAYA SENA, COORDINATOR FOR THE 'SOON TO BE LAUNCHED' CABO VERDE NODE PRESENTED RESULTS FROM STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT WITHIN SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (USING CABO VERDE AS A CASE STUDY).



Identifying the Ocean Decade challenges: A common framework for Small Island Developing States

Naya Sena & Mitsuru Makino
The Atmosphere and Ocean Research Institute, The University of Tokyo, Japan

Background

- Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are:
 - Socio-ecologically vulnerable
 - More susceptible to Climate Change effects
 - Heavily dependent on the Ocean and its resources
- The Decade of Ocean Sciences (UNDOS) is crucial for promoting sustainable development in territories like SIDS

Until 2021, most of the Decade endorsements were not for regions where SIDS are predominant.

Endorsed Decade Projects: NA + EU = 80%

Endorsed Decade Activities: NA + EU = 68%

Endorsed Decade Programmes: NA + EU = 84%

The West African SIDS Cabo Verde was used as a model in this study:

- One of the first African National Decade Committee to be established
- High engagement in Decade activities
- Great need of ocean science production and multi-stakeholder engagement

The study site

Methods

Objectives

This study aims to assess local stakeholders' perceptions and:

- Identify the research needs in ocean science for Cabo Verde;
- Analyze the UNDOS challenges for Cabo Verde and for SIDS;
- Highlight the importance of UNDOS to SIDS.

Data collection: Online interviews, Literature Review

Target: Local stakeholders

Method: Snowball Sampling

Time: From July to August 2021

Questions Design, 27 Local stakeholders, Theory-driven Coding, Qualitative Analysis - NVIVO

Results and Discussion

The results from the NVivo coding are expressed in the Figure 1. On the vertical axis, the 10 UNDOS Challenges are listed. The horizontal axis expresses the number that each challenge was referenced by the local stakeholders.

Challenge	Number of References
1. Marine Pollution	7
2. Protect & Restore Ecosystems	37
3. Sustainable Blue Food	3
4. Sustainable Ocean Economy	38
5. Ocean-Climate Nexus	14
6. Community Resilience	5
7. Ocean Observations	13
8. Digital Representation	0
9. Capacity Development	20
10. Behavior Change	31

- Local Challenge 4 - "Using blue tourism income for local sustainable development", the necessity of steering most or part of blue tourism profits to the socio-economic development of local communities.
- Local Challenge 2 - "Designing and implementation of protected areas management plans", exposing the urgent need that Cabo Verde has to fully implement all nominated protected areas.
- Local Challenges 10 - "Increase government concern over environmental issues" which translates to environment-oriented policies and strategies, and to fostering of sustainable projects and practices.

Conclusion

- First assessment of UNDOS Challenges based on SIDS stakeholders' perceptions
- Local stakeholders should be involved in determining the "Ocean we want, so we can make the Science that we ALL need"
- Similar assessments are necessary on other SIDS

EARLY CAREER OCEAN PROFESSIONAL LANDSCAPE IN CANADA: NEEDS, BELIEFS, AND IDEAS

Achieving intergenerational equity by strengthening the diverse voices of early career ocean professionals in all ocean fields across Canada.

WHO IS AN ECOP?

An early career ocean professional (ECOP) self-identifies as anyone who makes their living from a healthy ocean within the first ten years of their career.

ECOPs will be the ones to inherit the decisions made about the ocean today as well as leadership roles in the blue economy.

EMPOWERING ECOPs

Through our network of ocean partners and ECOPs, we aim to address the following needs outlined in Canada's Blue Economy Strategy:

- ADAPT TO GENERATIONAL VALUES, INNOVATION, AND INTERESTS
- [RE]BUILD EARLY CAREER PROFESSIONALS' CONNECTIONS TO THE OCEAN
- DEVELOP AND COMMUNICATE CLEAR CAREER PATHWAYS
- SUPPORT EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES
- SUPPORT AND CREATE SECTOR STRATEGIES TO INTRODUCE ECOPs TO CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

INSIGHTS FROM ECOPs IN CANADA

110 early career ocean professionals in Canada voiced their needs

Demographics: 70% Female | 28% Male | 2% Non-binary

Top words to describe an ECOP: sustainability, collaboration, support, future, protection, science, creation, resilient, diverse, opportunity, passion, innovation, networking, engagement, learning, independent, conservation, job, young, action, engaged, scientist, communication, training, climate change, dedication, innovation, passion, development, future, protection, sustainability, collaboration, support, future, protection, science, creation, resilient, diverse, opportunity, passion, innovation, networking, engagement, learning, independent, conservation, job, young, action, engaged, scientist.

Barriers to ECOP participation in the Ocean Decade

- Lack of funding
- Lack of training opportunities
- Lack of career opportunities
- Lack of community/network
- Demographic inequality
- Language barrier
- Other
- No barriers

Additional barriers: Lack of adequate facilities, Uncertainty in how to participate, Lack of open datasets & open access publications, Lack of time due to existing commitments.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STRENGTHENING DIVERSE ECOP VOICES IN THE OCEAN DECADE

As Early Career Ocean Professionals, there are many opportunities that seem out of reach or not possible. Whether the reason is due to financial barriers, time restrictions or lack of awareness of events/opportunities, ECOPs are not well represented at ocean conservation events. This is devastating to the marine protection community. It's missing out on youth perspectives, passion, and insights into many of the issues that our oceans are facing. Consequently, networks like ECOP Canada are incredibly important. It allows early career professionals the support, guidance, and connections that are needed to encourage early career professionals to be a part of the discussion. -Jeanine Sinclair, Plastic Free BC

ECOPs and youth alike are in a perfect position to make meaningful contributions and successions to a better planet. Add in the amazing knowledge systems of Indigenous cultures, and you have yourself a perfect storm of innovation and prosperity. The amount of intricate knowledge and ways of understanding that youth have about the ocean is vastly underestimated. An opportunity for them to be part of the discussion table will not only give the team an important addition to the collective worldview, but it will also rightfully give the youth a position to be empowered and take leadership in their own backyard. -Justin Milton, Ikaavik

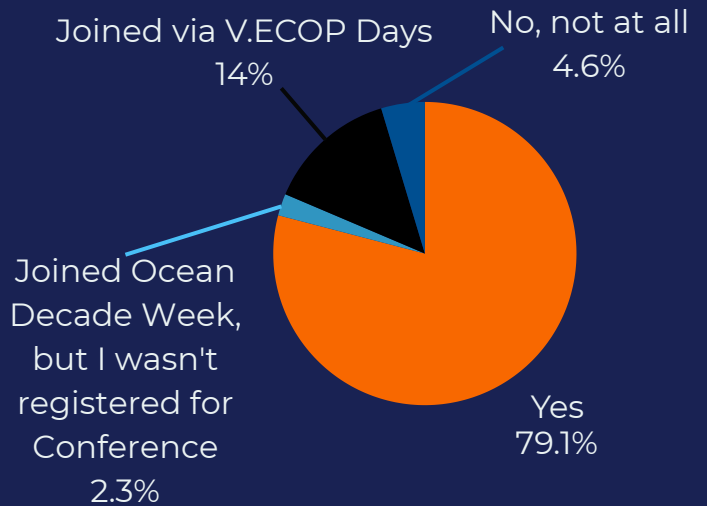
ECOP CANADA ARE THE LONGEST RUNNING NATIONAL NODE WITHIN THE ECOP PROGRAMME, THEIR POSTER FOCUSED ON WAYS TO EMPOWER ECOPs AND THE IMPORTANCE OF STRENGTHENING THE DIVERSE VOICES OF EARLY CAREER OCEAN PROFESSIONALS WITHIN THE UN OCEAN DECADE.

PART 3: FEEDBACK

This section presents the results from the questionnaire we released after the UN Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona. These questions refer to feedback about the actual event and people's experiences during their time there. We have included relevant comments from survey participants throughout this section.

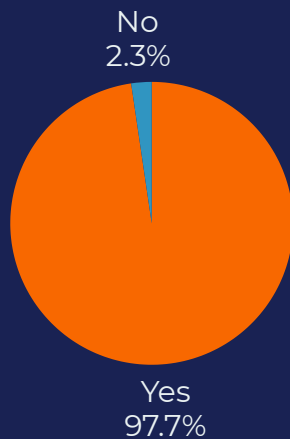


Did you attend the Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona?

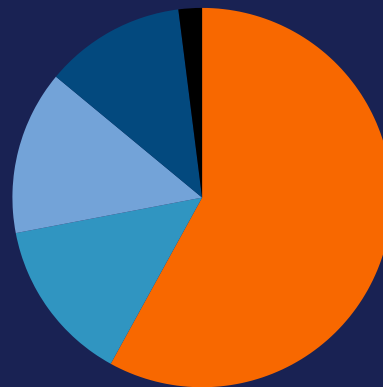


RESULTS OF SURVEY 2

Are you an Early Career Ocean Professional?



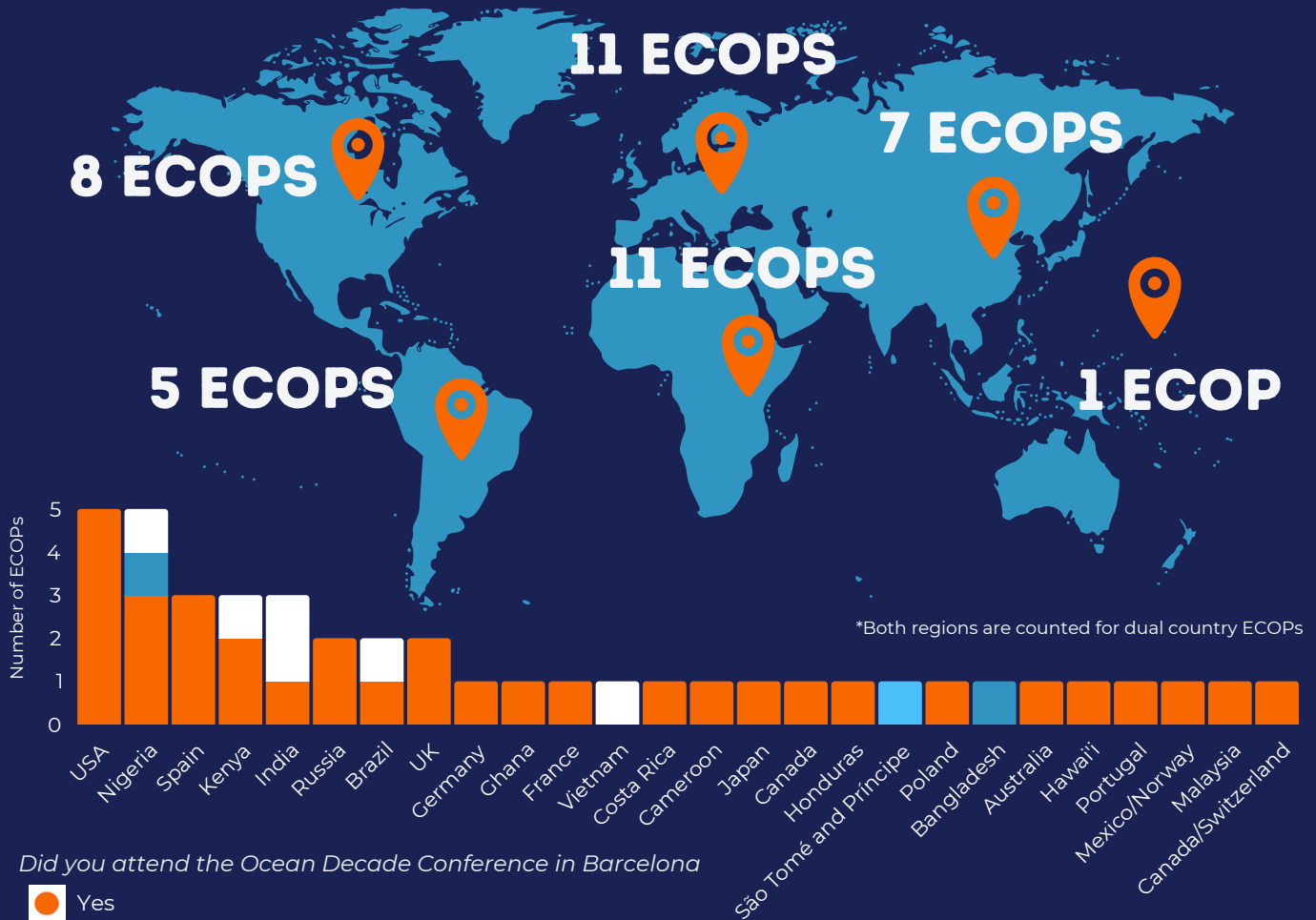
How did you hear about the ECOP Programme?



- I am involved in the ECOP Programme as a coordinator or task team lead/member so already know about it = 67.4%
- Through ECOP Programme communications - website/social media/newsletter = 16.3%
- Through the Ocean Decade Network - I joined the group there = 16.3%
- Through word of mouth - I was connected via a friend, colleague or an ECOP Programme coordinator = 14%
- Through work = 2.3%

PART 3: FEEDBACK

Where are you from/currently living?*



Did you attend the Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona



Did you have a speaking role at the Ocean Decade Conference, or for a satellite event (including V.ECOP Days)?

I co-organized events, was an event host, a panelist and a moderator
2.3%

I organized/helped organize one or more events, but didn't speak
25.6%

I was a moderator for an event/multiple events
2.3%

I had multiple speaking roles
11.6%



PART 3: FEEDBACK

Can you tell us a bit more about the role you had? What did you learn by doing this role?

I participated in the organization of the Satellite Event: Looking SEAWARD: African Oceans and the Decade Narrative. The event was a huge success. I also presented a contribution on "Entrepreneurial Needs Assessment Among ECOPs in Africa." during the V-ECOP days.

I was a speaker at a Pre-ODC webinar, as part of Black in Marine Sciences Tidal Wave fellows. I supported other fellows that had posters and oral presentations, as an OceanKAN executive committee member, I supported and networked with our members and other networks. I was very busy in my role as a Network Weaver as I connected different people together.

I was a speaker at a citizen science roundtable in V.ECOP Days. It was a great platform to discuss with other project leaders about the challenges and successes of our work and have a global virtual audience.

I co-organized one of the satellite events. My main conclusion is that working with a group of people from very different backgrounds and points of view is challenging and time consuming but pays the effort.

"I gave a presentation during a satellite event on source to sea and ocean acidification and also was on a panel during an event on moving from science to action, speaking about the importance of effective and inclusive communication. I was very nervous before presenting but received a lot of positive feedback. I was probably very nervous because I felt intimidated by being in a room full of experts and senior scientists and sometimes worry that because I am early in my career I can't converse in the same way that they can about topics. However, a lot of the feedback I got was that my presentation and what I said on the panel was really interesting and I realised that what I lack in experience I make up for in my fresh perspectives and ability to keep things short but informative."

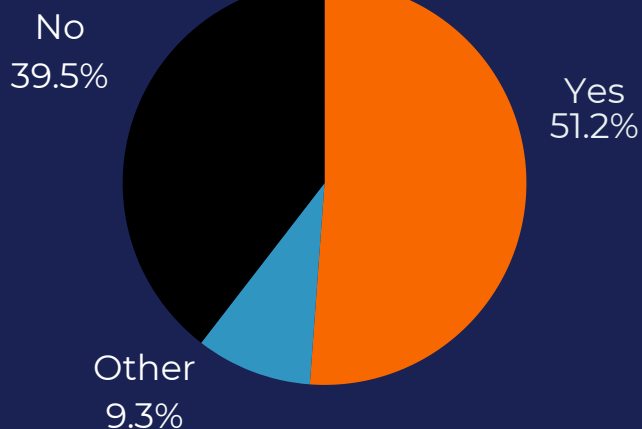
ECOP speakers and moderators were very confident and articulate, that was very inspiring to see.

PART 3: FEEDBACK

Did you think there was enough inclusion for ECOPs at the Ocean Decade Conference/Week?



Why? (Other)
“There has definitely been some progress since previous conferences (e.g., UNOC in Lisbon) but the situation is not ideal yet.”



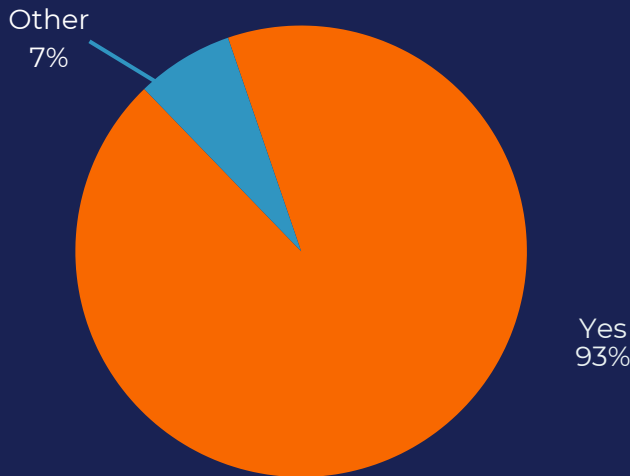
Why? (No)
“Due to the process of admission/registration, I feel like many Decade Action Owners, Youth Under 25, and Global South representatives were not able to attend. The people that actually need to be in the room for these conversations and have their voices heard. The lack of accessibility on multiple fronts for this conference was not great. For example, the main sessions did not have translators, auto captions, or sign language interpretation.”
“Less individuals from LDCs and LMICs represented at the event as compared to developed countries.”

Why? (Yes)
“The ECOP Programme was really extensive. I felt the core concerns were inclusive generally. I was also supported to attend as an ECOP.”
“ECOPs were fully represented and played a key and important role at every level of the conference. They were very visible and had a very wide coverage.”
“ECOPs (as far as I noticed) mostly had their own events/panels or were moderators and not as often main speakers.”
“Yes I feel the ECOP got a good representation at the conference through virtual mode, however with more travel grants available to ECOPs their participation would grow more meaningfully.”
“So many speakers touched on ECOP in their talk, and a lot of events/sessions featured ECOPs.”

PART 3: FEEDBACK

BENEFITS

Did you find attending the Ocean Decade Conference/Week beneficial?



As an ECOP, being invited to participate in this event was a great opportunity. It was the first time I participated in one of such events and I really enjoyed and learnt a lot!

Other answers:

“It was very beneficial for networking, the actual events, topics, outcomes were not much different from what was done and said in 2022 though. It seems that we are still talking the walk and not walking the talk.”

“Yes, but I could not join most of the sections because of network issues.”
(The respondent was joining online and the issues came from within their own country)

“I found the in between networking and relationship building way more beneficial than many of the side events or main session events.”

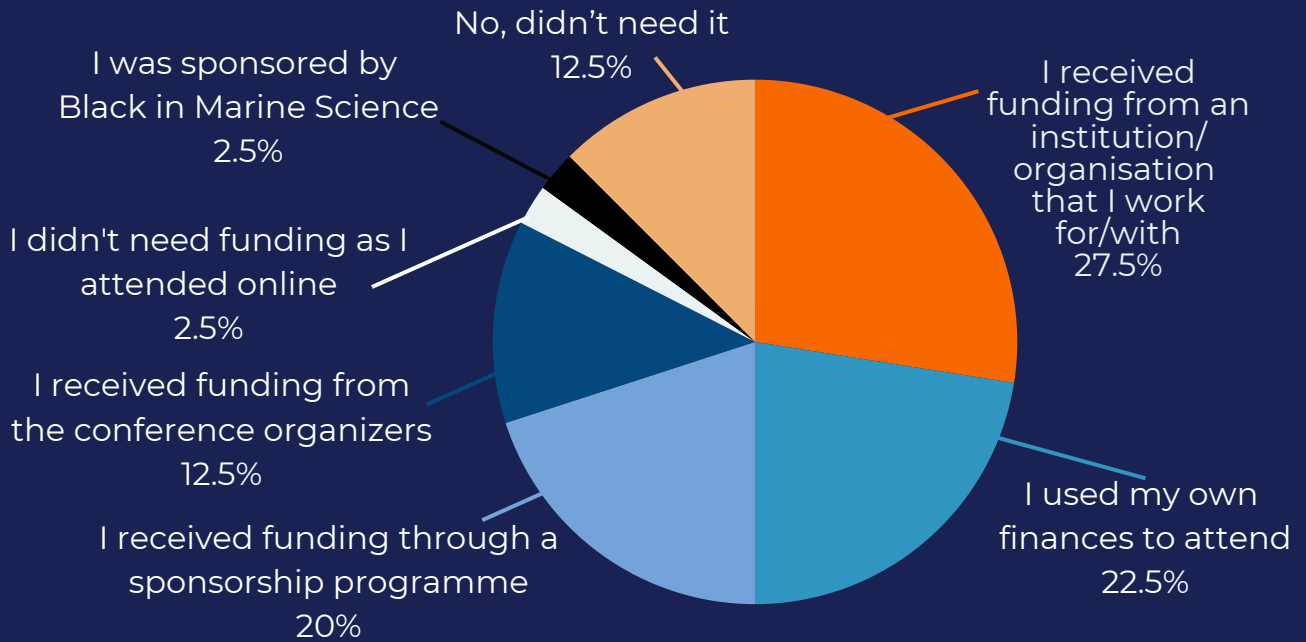
What did you find most beneficial?



PART 3: FEEDBACK

FUNDING

Did you have access to any financial support to attend Ocean Decade Conference/Week?



Did you find there were any challenges to attend the Ocean Decade Conference/Week, for you or ECOPs specifically?

Yes, funding the travel and time to be present.

No because I was funded by UNESCO to go. I couldn't have attended without that funding.

Cost is likely the biggest challenge for me. If it wasn't for a grant I would not have been able to attend.

Not me because I'm from Barcelona but I believe for some ECOPs can be a challenge economically.

Funding and visa challenges.

FUNDING. I could not take care of the funding.

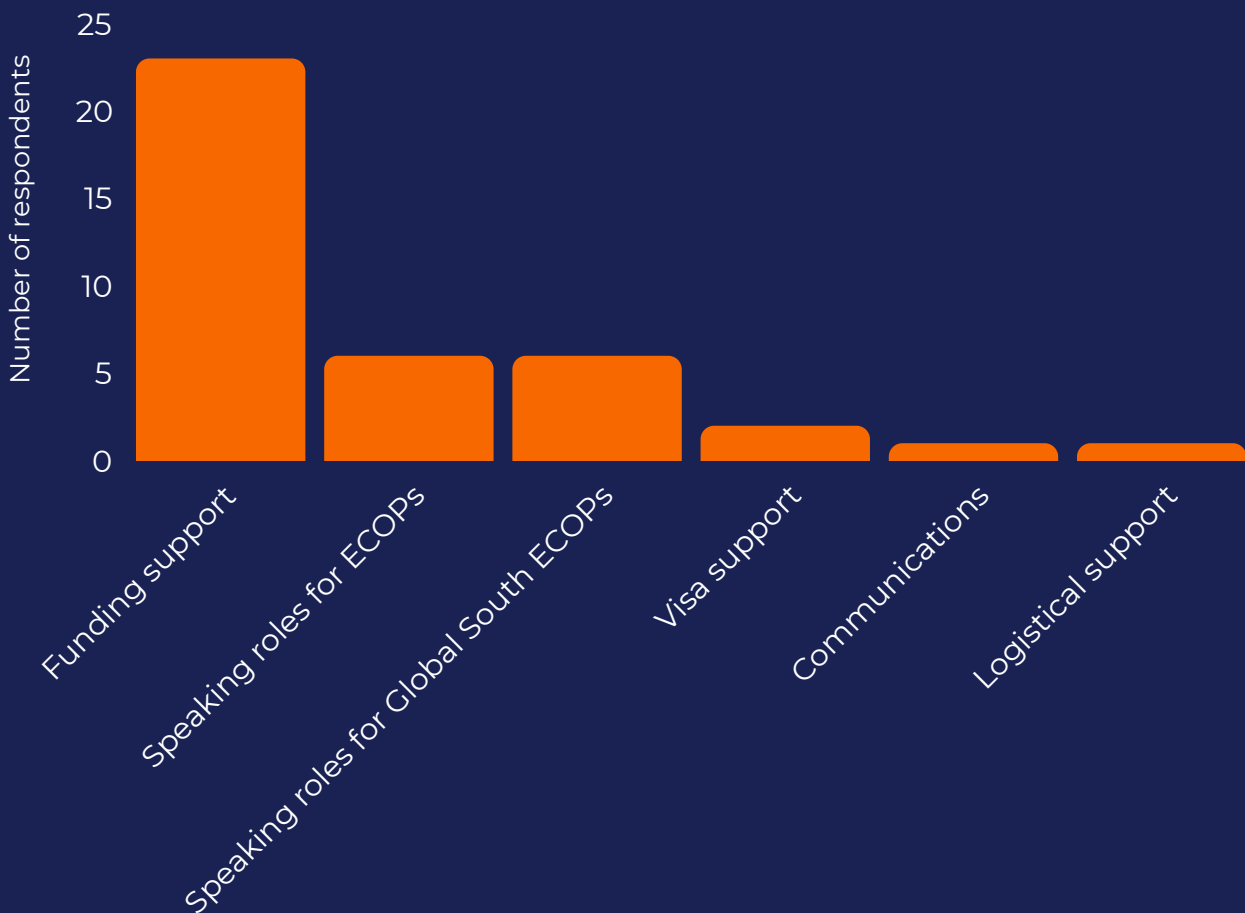
PART 3: FEEDBACK

CHALLENGES

“ I was a speaker and panelist during one of the parallel sessions dedicated to Challenge #9. Because the presentation needed to be short (5min) and limited to 4 slides, it served as a valuable exercise for me to refine my speech and maintain focus on conveying the most crucial insights to my audience. In addition, I really appreciated the opportunity to contribute critical feedback to the latest version of the White Paper. The moderator (and co-lead of the White Paper) took note of my comments and it felt that I was also part of the process, that my voice mattered, which provided me with a true sense of agency. ”

“ One challenge that many of us encountered are the compromises we had to make when attending satellite events during the first two days of the Ocean Decade Week. There were too many events happening simultaneously and some events suffered more than others when it came to attendance and engagement. ”


What do you think could be improved to enable more ECOPs to participate in the Ocean Decade Conference/Week?




 “Inclusivity of people from different societal levels (e.g. fishermen, divers).”

 “Grassroots representation as well as politicians.”

 “Representation from the Asian region was relatively limited, particularly ECOPs from Asia. This is quite natural given the distance, but more encouragement to them would be valuable.”


 “Greater representation and inclusion of frontline stakeholders, including fisherfolk, coastal community leaders and indigenous representatives, especially during the plenary and high-level panels. Some regions lacked representatives (especially ECOPs) and their voices could not be heard, namely from South/Southeast Asia and Latin America.”


 “Activities to relax (yoga, meditate, connect with nature), funding opportunities sessions.”

 “Easier access to the program or agenda. Meeting with mentors, this was something that I felt it was missing. Making a space to meet and introduce to others in the fields in higher positions.”


 “The general Society-representatives who are affected by climate change and are undertaking mitigation.”

□ “More organized networking opportunities.”

 “A lot of talk about indigenous knowledge did not include indigenous voices. Non-indigenous people shouldn't be the ones talking about indigenous knowledge by themselves.”

 “There was a lot of focus on high level policy, soaked with high political standing. These felt like a lot of words but not as much action and solutions as I might've liked.”

 “More scientific discussions; more time for oral presentations; specific time for poster presentations.”

 “Accessibility, Representation, Calls to Action. The Decade does a great job of building structure and talking about what needs to be done, instead of actually taking action. As young people, meetings like this can often feel like a lot of false promises.”

PART 3: FEEDBACK

WHAT WAS MISSING?

🕒 “More time to attend more events.”

🏗️ “More involvement from developing countries in the plenary.”

🗂️ “Better organization regarding registrations and funding support. I got the funding but couldn't use because it wasn't well organized. I ended up having troubles to pay my expenses.”

📍 “Meeting/networking points. It was easy to network and get to know people, only if you knew your way around, but for ECOPs it can be hard to start building a network. More interactive events where people can gather and get to know each other would be very beneficial.”

🌐 “Representation from the Global South and LDCs.”

📱 “Although there were posters, there was no poster session so it was very difficult to speak further about the content of the poster with the authors.”

🗣️ “Sometimes it feels like we are just in an echo chamber and the sessions could have been clearer on what they hope to get out of them so that important decision makers are in the room and know what they should do with the information shared. More time for discussions with the audience would be good I think and a focus on how to use the science discussed for action.”

💰 “More funding and mentorship opportunities for ECOPs.”

☂️ “More breaks for networking, more rooms for networking and working, less simultaneous events.”

👤 “Representatives of the private sector. Practice-oriented events eg. hackathons”

🌍 “Many ECOPs from underrepresented regions of the globe were unable to attend due to visa limitations and cost prohibitions. It would behoove future conference organizers to plan for similar congresses to take place in more accessible and diverse parts of the world (i.e. Latin America, Southeast Asia, Africa).”

🗑️ “More inclusivity. And more down to earth talks. Some special [events] were inspiring, but more practical examples of success or failure, i.e. for localizing, were lacking.”

PART 3: FEEDBACK

Would you recommend attending the Ocean Decade Conference/Week or events like this in general to other ECOPs?

Maybe, based on funding decisions
2.3%

N/A
2.3%

Yes
95.3%

ECOP RECOMMENDATIONS

TOP 10 RECOMMENDATIONS

To complete this survey, the ECOP Programme asked:

As we look towards the next milestone in the Ocean Decade - the 3rd UN Ocean Conference (UNOC) in Nice in 2025 - **how can ECOPs (and the ECOP Programme) work together to get organized, improve participation and collaboration, and help achieve the outcomes outlined in the Barcelona statement?**

**Whilst we received many different answers to this open question, we used a coding system (Python) to identify the ten most frequent and relevant points we received:*

- 1. Funding and Financial Support:** This is simply essential to ensure ECOPs' participation in conferences and overcome financial hurdles that may prevent them from engaging.
- 2. Inclusion in Planning and Main Events:** We suggest a panel of ECOPs are part of decision-making processes when it comes to future conferences and events.
- 3. Effective Communication and Outreach:** This includes being able to reach individuals in the margins is vital for engaging and including underrepresented communities.
- 4. Capacity Building and Collaboration:** This is necessary for training, guidance, mentorship and dialogue, which is vital for fostering global ECOP engagement in events.
- 5. Support for Specific Regions and Groups:** Further focus on supporting regions like Africa and marginalized communities with travel grants and incentives is needed.
- 6. Increase Number and Frequency of Conferences:** This could offer more opportunities for ECOPs to gather, exchange ideas, and engage in formal and informal settings.
- 7. Organizational Support:** Providing consistent communication, expectations, and resources to ECOPs, as well as online or hybrid sessions/events.
- 8. Allow ECOPs to speak on Sustainable Practices:** Emphasize ECOP participation in specific topics: ocean literacy, sustainable fishing, and establishing well-managed MPAs.
- 9. Overcoming Barriers:** Addressing visa support and other logistical challenges faced by ECOPs (especially those from the "Global South").
- 10. Inclusivity and Representation:** Striving for more inclusive approaches and ensuring diverse voices are heard in international conferences and events.

PART 3: FEEDBACK

RECOMMENDATIONS

“ We should strive for ever more support (including assistance with visa processes in the Global South) to bring ECOPs whose voices remain missing conference after conference after conference. And chief among them are ECOPs from local coastal and indigenous communities, whose voices are usually shared virtually through a video or recording. Their presence is needed and their invaluable knowledge and lived experiences should permeate these international conferences. ”

“ I think the key is not to wait till the last minute. These conversations are happening now, committees have already been formed by France and Costa Rica for the planning of Nice 2025. We need to hold them accountable and make sure that ECOPs, the Global South and Youth under 25 are a part of these conversations at every stage not just an afterthought. ”

“ Call for more numerous conferences in general (not only for ECOPs); call for consistent financial support for ECOPs which could be available 3-4 months in advance; call for visa support from the conference organizers and direct contact with consulates where needed. ”

“ The in-person informal ECOP gatherings on Monday and Thursday of the conference week, along with the ECOP Programme satellite events, were among the most valuable sessions that I attended because of the opportunities they afforded to liaise and connect with so many other like-minded contemporaries. Organizing a series of virtual networking events would reap great benefits in pushing the ECOP Programme forward. A suggested agenda for such meetings would be to invite a few ECOPs to give brief pitches on their current work, and then leave ample time for informal conversation and brainstorming to follow the presentation period. All are welcome to attend and contribute, but none are required. I would recommend against sorting these meetings by region or discipline to encourage the type of inter-sectoral and transnational collaborations that the future well-being of our one Global Ocean demands. ”

“ I felt the ECOP program was one of the most organized groups at this conference because there was a lot of communication from the leadership. It would be useful to continue that and increase communication about what to expect going to a conference like this vs a more typical science conference. ”

“ Funding being made available - I know I can't attend without it. And having this confirmed much earlier. I felt excluded from submitting satellite events and committing to speaking due to not knowing if I would be able to attend until only a [few] months before the conference and after submissions had closed. ”

PART 3: FEEDBACK

SURVEY 2 ANALYSIS

For the second survey, we had ECOPs (and one non-ECOP) respond from 28 countries, and as in the first survey, the predominant region was Europe, with the least represented ones being Oceania and South America.

There were a range of avenues that ECOPs received funding support from, with 62.5% receiving financial support to attend. Despite this, financial capacity was still the no.1 challenge for ECOPs. Regardless of the challenges, a very high percentage (95.3%) would recommend the Ocean Decade Conference to others, and notably the networking and knowledge sharing that is part of events such as this were highlighted as the most beneficial aspects.

According to the information collected in survey 2 (page 27), 83.7% of respondents participated in events in different ways, with ECOPs speaking at and co-leading events, while others contributed behind the scenes by coordinating speakers/presenters, and assisting with operations.



“The ECOPs of the UN Ocean Decade are a highly motivated group of individuals striving to make a difference in their local communities around the world to advance knowledge, awareness, appreciation, and respect for the Global Ocean. They are ready and willing to take on global grand challenges relating to sustainable development and deserve to be provided with the platforms, resources, and equities necessary to affect transformational change for the betterment of the planet.”

As speakers and panelists at various events, ECOPs contributed to discussions on challenges and successes within marine science (in relation to the Decade framework), and by organizing side events they contributed to strategic planning for the future.

Their participation in these activities highlighted the importance of effective communication, collaboration, and the need for better resources and community-driven efforts in facing and tackling the Ocean Decade challenges; as well as the need to continually include and invite ECOPs to participate in Ocean Decade, IOC-UNESCO and UN events.



PART 3: ECOP TESTIMONIALS

MARTA PRZEPIÓRA, ECOP MEMBER, POLAND



"I flew to Barcelona to experience the UN Ocean Decade Week all by myself. I attended the satellite events offsite, I joined workshops, panel discussions, networking events, as well as inspiring film, photo, and art exhibitions. I especially loved seeing water sports collaborating with ocean science - my two passions. At the Conference, I visited many booths, talked to interesting people about their fascinating work, checked out all the posters, and sang a sea shanty for One Ocean. My key takeaway was the importance of collaboration among scientists, policymakers, investors, youth, coastal communities, water sports enthusiasts, fishermen and ocean lovers worldwide. I'm so grateful for the connections I made there."

CRAWFORD NIMEA, ECOP PACIFIC ISLANDS & NATIONAL OCEANIC RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY, MICRONESIA



"Participating in the UN Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona was a highlight. Beyond the main event, a rewarding experience was being a panellist at the "Building Ocean Leadership" satellite event (Thematic Session 4).

There, I shared my experience of having a non-linear career path, from liberal arts to rooting interest in sustainable fisheries, and emphasized the value of transferable skills through fully utilizing one's gifts and talents and becoming resilient in the face of inevitable changes.

I also offered my definition of leadership: seeing certain things that other people are missing and being able to put people together for a certain common purpose for the greater good. The discussion was engaging, with attendees appreciating my insights and sharing their own experiences. Leaving the conference, I felt empowered to keep working in the fisheries sector with greater consciousness towards sustainable fisheries in the ocean context, fuelled by the collaborative spirit that was present throughout the conference."

PART 3: ECOP TESTIMONIALS

OLUSOLA ADEOYE,
ECOP AFRICA,



“My attendance at the 2024 UN Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona was a testimonial to my love for the ocean and the outcome of collaborative work with ECOPs globally from the Southeastern city of Lagos, Nigeria. My participation was a high water mark, and monumental as it provided me with a rare opportunity to meet in-person for the first time several fellow ECOPs from and outside Africa for the first time. The conference created a platform for my colleagues and I to share the ocean stories of Africa to a larger global audience in a way that reflects our passion and determination to embrace science and traditional knowledge to address the myriad of ocean challenges facing our ocean and the people who directly depend on it. I met new actors working in ocean space who cherish my work and are willing to collaborate and support our Coast2Deep Sea Initiative that empower coastal youth through citizen science to use drones and low cost underwater equipment such as cameras for habitat mapping and conservation of their fishing grounds.”



EVONNE TAN,
ECOP MALAYSIA

“The conference week has been a humbling learning journey for me as a young researcher and a life-changing experience as an individual. I have learned that ocean science is trivial without the involvement of relevant stakeholders and society. I truly believe that ocean science exists to serve the community by understanding challenges and delivering solutions to the environment and community. Researchers should re-position themselves as listeners and work closely alongside the community. Not forgetting that my friendship with fellow awardees from VLIZ Belgium turned out to be the most surprising yet beautiful gift from the conference. My encounter with them convinced me that ocean science is never about race or competition or rivalry; it is about connecting and sharing. Our friendship reassured me that the future of ocean science is going to be bright and promising. Together, we can bring the change we need for the future as young people.”

PART 3: ECOP TESTIMONIALS

JULIANA DI FILIPPO, ECOP CENTRAL AMERICA, COLOMBIA



“Attending the UN Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona was a unique opportunity for me. It was very motivating to be fortunate enough to meet people working in different projects around the world who are also so passionate and committed to working, educating and communicating with one common goal: to conserve our oceans and their biodiversity, while ensuring the well-being of the communities that depend on them involving different sectors of society. On the other hand, being a representative of Latin America at the conference allowed me to give a voice to those who rarely have one, and in my opinion, it would be very important that in future events Third World countries have a greater representation in such events, that ethnic minorities and coastal communities gain more visibility and importance, because only then we will be able to achieve significant real changes in our fight against climate change.”



EMILY NOCITO, ECOP USA

“I had an amazing time at the Ocean Decade Conference - just as important as the side events, sessions, and plenaries was the opportunity to connect with other Early Career Ocean Professionals from across the world. I ran into old friends, some who I haven't seen in years, and made new friends and colleagues. The energy and passion in every session was galvanizing, and I left the conference with new ideas and most importantly, hope.”

KOTARO TANAKA, ECOP JAPAN

“When I lived near Barcelona as a visiting student six years ago, I never even thought that UN Ocean Decade would be initiated in a few years, and that its conference would be the reason to bring me back to that lovely Mediterranean city again.

At the conference, I presented a recent activity of ECOP Japan at a satellite event - 'Ocean Literacy Dialogues'. Besides attending ECOP-related events/sessions, I participated in several programs featuring the science-industry nexus. It was great to see such collaboration is moving forward, and conversely, it evoked the importance of reaching out to ECOPs in the private sectors. Throughout the conference, representation of ECOPs from Africa and small island nations were prominent, while Asian regions are still relatively limited. ECOP Japan will keep working for expanding the ECOP network within and out of Japan, aiming at empowering the voice from ECOPs in Asian region.”



PART 4: OUTCOMES



In the final part of this document we have brought together the evidence and findings on attendance, engagement, and feedback and identified five key outcomes, which summarize the ECOP Programme's participation and impact at the 2024 UN Ocean Decade Conference and during the Ocean Decade Week.

1

The ECOP Programme successfully contributed to the Ocean Decade Conference through five satellite events, with over 400 attendees in total.

Our co-hosted events provided meaningful networking opportunities and capacity development for ECOPs, along with the chance to learn both from experts and from one another across a range of important ECOP-specific topics.

The events featured many members of our team(s) and served to strengthen our relationships within the programme, as well as external partnerships with other organizations - specifically event partners such as International Ocean Institute and Edinburgh Ocean Leaders, among others. We did not have space to include all the events organized and co-organized by our nodes and members in this document - but we would like to give a special mention to the OceanBRIDGES task team, ECOP Canada and ECOP Africa who all co-hosted their own events, proving that ECOPs have extensive capabilities for organizing and conducting professional events, despite having limited resources.



2

The ECOP Programme's network has grown fivefold since the 2022 UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon – from **nearly 950 members in July 2022**, to **over 4,600 members by the time of the Barcelona Conference, to over 6000 at the time of releasing this report** – supporting its global community through regional and national coordination teams and thematic groups.

The Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona saw **over 145 ECOP attendees** – approximately 10% of the total number of participants – many of whom contributed to the Conference program as speakers, event organizers, panel moderators, oral presenters and more.



The **voice of the ECOP community has been elevated through meaningful inclusion and involvement in discussions, events, publications and policy statements**, thanks to **new and existing partnerships and collaborations during the Ocean Decade Conference**. Members of our network (and team) participated as experts in their field, representing different institutions, perspectives, cultures and contributing as ocean professionals working towards the Ocean Decade Outcomes. The topics they were able to contribute to are diverse, spanning the 10 Decade Challenges such as the blue economy, marine pollution, seabed mapping, digital ocean literacy, best practices, marine ecosystem health and regional capacity building.



The ECOP Programme is **helping empower ECOPs to speak up about their views, their needs, and the challenges they face** when it comes to **engaging in "high level" discussions/dialogues**. **We are also actively working to change and overcome the systemic and unseen barriers for ECOPs to participate and engage in such events.**

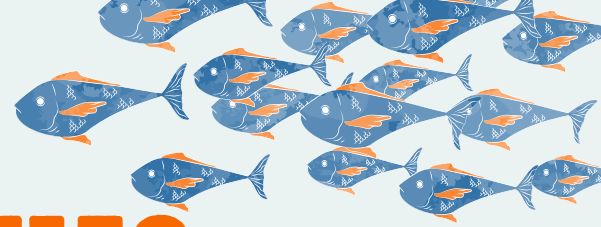
The Ocean Decade framework intends to be truly "transformative", and by working closely with the Ocean Decade structure, we believe we have the potential to transcend the hierarchical model that hinders many early career professionals from engaging in "high level" discussions/dialogues.

We have witnessed exponential growth in our network, and this trend will likely continue, as inter-, multi-, and trans-disciplinary topics within the ocean sector continue to emerge. We have direct access to a diverse, dedicated and talented pool of Early Career Ocean Professionals and are actively championing their work to foster momentum and support for their expertise.

5

The ECOP Programme **helps ECOPs from underrepresented regions overcome structural barriers by creating opportunities for their work to be recognized**. However, **we have found these barriers to be extremely nuanced, and unique even down to the individual level**. A **"one size fits all" approach may not be appropriate in these circumstances, and may even create further challenges or exclusion**. By providing feedback about real life experiences, we can learn the best ways to enable marginalised communities within the global ECOP network to increase their access and participation, and elevate their contributions to the Ocean Decade. This is why gaining important feedback from participants (and those that could not participate) through investigating and reporting on events such as the Ocean Decade Conference is integral to persist towards a more inclusive and equitable Ocean Decade.

PART 5: FUTURE PRIORITIES



Finally, to conclude this report, we have brought together the results of the surveys, the outcomes from the events and the feedback points provided by the ECOP community, in order to identify five priority areas to align our efforts in the lead up to the next UN Ocean Conference.

With UNOC #3 being in Nice, France in June 2025, we have also included tangible actions to help achieve these priorities, and encourage enabling partners to reach out and partner with us to collaboratively implement these actions.

1

We very much commend the efforts taken to financially support ECOPs by IOC-UNESCO, the conference organizers and other organizations worldwide too. Such financial help is needed for further conferences to support ECOPs who do not have access to extra funds, especially ECOPs from SIDS, LDCs, countries in conflict or indigenous communities.



We call for conference organizers to establish central funding for ECOPs. We also encourage organizations to open their calls ideally 4-5 months before the event for people to receive the outcome of their application well in advance. This way they will have ample time to prepare and apply for visas and arrange their travel (and budgets), accordingly. We call for numerous and geographically diverse funding avenues to assist ECOPs from all regions, and for the funding application process to be streamlined. It would be very helpful to gather such relevant funding information on the website of this conference.

2

We appreciate how far events like the Ocean Decade Conference (UNODC) have moved forward in terms of inclusion of ECOPs. Attendance for those professionals that need a visa, is always a bit challenging and requires more planning and coordination.



We call for conference organizers to establish central support for all professionals who need visa assistance. We call for organizers to communicate registration/attendance application outcomes to potential participants that would require visa support, not later than 3 months before the start of the conference. This will also help them commit to take on active roles during these events, such as speakers, panelists, moderators, as they will know whether they are able to come or not. The recent UNODC did a great job with visa support through high-level connections between participants and consulates, as several ECOP Programme team members were contacted and supported with the process, which should be continued for other events.

PART 5: FUTURE PRIORITIES

3

Getting accreditation slots to attend conferences like UNOCs and COPs in order to improve representation of ECOPs and enable their attendance at in-person events (especially those from underrepresented regions, Global South, LDCs, and diverse societal levels who might experience greater challenges or less understood needs/barriers).



Provide additional accreditation quotas going towards ECOPs, for example, to establish 1-2 mandatory ECOP slots per accredited organization.

4

We hope to see ECOPs integrated into the organizational levels of such events, as well as decision-making fora. It has been made for the Ocean Decade Conference and we believe this would be beneficial for further events too. This will allow organizers of such events to understand better the challenges of ECOPs to attend conferences and thus react accordingly.



Ensure ECOPs are represented in working groups and committees for the event preparation and allow for more speaker roles and events led by ECOPs, inviting them to set the agenda and contribute to the delivery of specific information within in-person events.

5

Mentorship opportunities are extremely valuable for Early Career Ocean Professionals, as well as online sessions, in-person workshops, hackathons and informal meetings. All enabled the global community of ECOPs to be able to participate in discussions, activities, agenda-setting and collaborative work towards the Decade Challenges.



We call for sponsorships and/or partnerships to allow more networking activities during conferences, as well as investment in mentoring schemes that help ECOPs understand how to obtain funding, and assist them to become more pro-active in seeking out their own opportunities in this area. Get-togethers provide an opportunity for meaningful networking and informal exchange, so we urge for established institutions/organizations to facilitate events for peer-to-peer and intergenerational collaboration.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our supporting partners: IOC-UNESCO and Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD); as well as the organisations whose support made the attendance of the ECOP Programme team at the UN Ocean Decade Conference possible.



We also extend our gratitude to everyone who is part of the global ECOP community and in particular those who contributed their data, photos, time and input, which was vital to compile this Impact Report.



ONE OF THE POSTERS ON DISPLAY DURING THE OCEAN DECADE CONFERENCE BY SOI FOUNDATION'S BLUE FUTURE PATHWAYS (A UN OCEAN DECADE ENDORSED PROJECT HOSTED UNDER THE ECOP PROGRAMME).

Special thanks go to all the partners and people the ECOP Programme teams worked with to co-host our side events at the Conference and during Ocean Decade Week.

If, having read this report, **you would like to discuss any of the content or explore opportunities with the ECOP Programme to amplify future impact, please email:**

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Photo: NOAM/Unsplash