EUROMARINE
EUROPEAN MARINE RESEARCH NETWORK

Blue skills and youth engagement in the EU landscape

EMD in my Country, Black Sea Blue Economy Youth and Women Watch

Eirini Apazoglou, 20th October 2026



Setting the Scene

November 2020

European Commission

European Skills Agenda

The European Skills Agenda is a five-year plan to help individuals and businesses develop more and better skills and to put them to use, by:

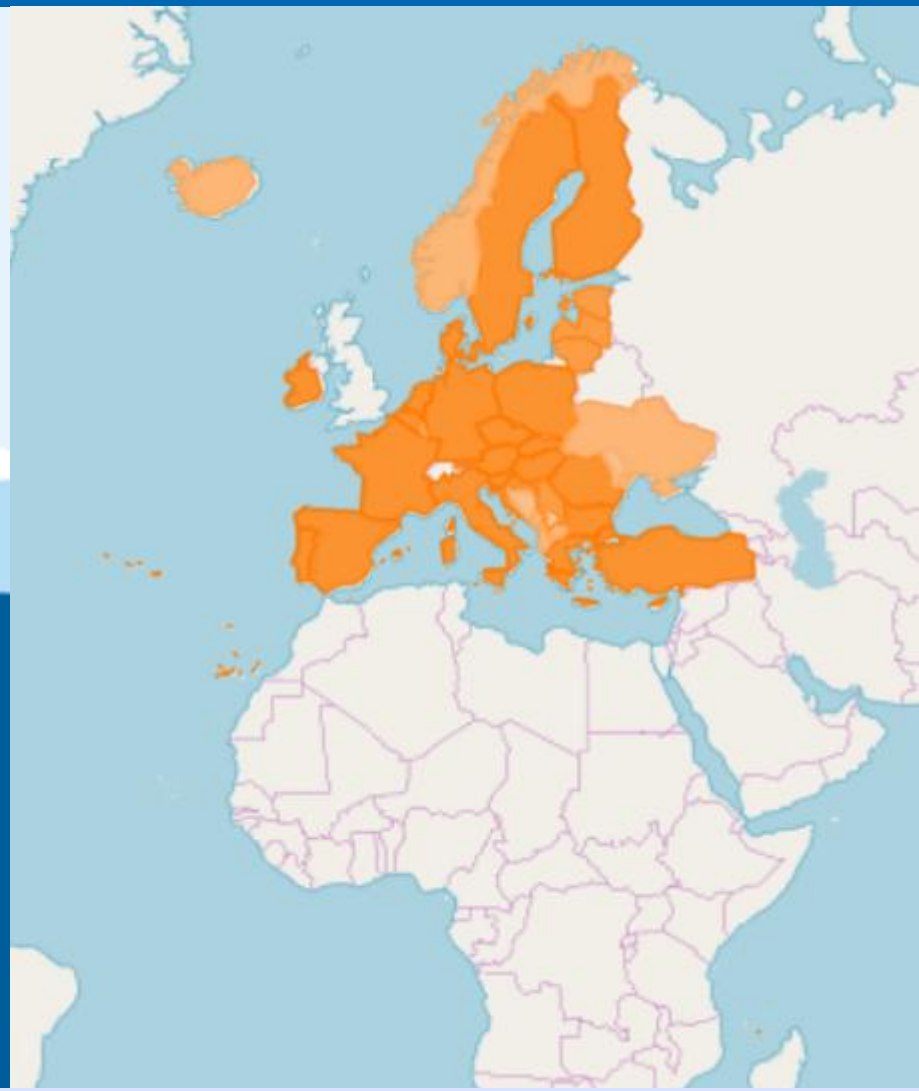
- strengthening **sustainable competitiveness**, as set out in the European Green Deal
- ensuring **social fairness**, putting into practice the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights: access to education, training and lifelong learning for everybody, everywhere in the EU
- building **resilience** to react to crises, based on the lessons learnt during the COVID-19 pandemic

https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/index_en

Welcome to the Pact for Skills

The Pact for Skills aims to get public and private organisations together and encourage them to make concrete commitments to upskilling and reskilling adults.

Join the Pact >



4000 Members

20 large-scale skills partnerships	22 regional skills partnerships	65 other partnerships	3300 individual members

2022 - 2023

European Commission

The EU supports cooperation projects between business and education through **the "Blue careers in Europe" calls for proposals** under the European Maritime and Fisheries (EMFF) and European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture (EMFAF) Funds.

2022

- 18 projects for €11 million

2023

- 8 projects for €7.5 million

BLUE PORTS TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

turning blue

BlueAquaEdu

uBlueTec — Blue Green Digital Skills —

BOUTCAR BLUE JOBS THROUGH BLUE CAREERS

Blue Bio Techpreneurs

NEXT BlueGeneration

coastal pro®

European Commission

June 2025

Study to Support and Design Skills Development in the Blue Economy

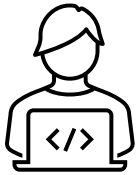
The European Commission has funded a study on blue skills with a view to addressing needs and gaps, developing a competency framework, and shaping future policy initiatives.

In line with the **European Ocean Pact**, it seeks to shape the EU's vision for a sustainable and inclusive blue economy, ensuring that **its workforce remains at the forefront of global maritime innovation and leadership.** The study also aims to contribute to the objectives of the **Pact for Skills** and the broader **Union of Skills** initiative.

study with the objective of **mapping the current skills landscape, identifying future needs, and proposing actionable recommendations to address skills gaps and mismatches across blue economy sectors.**

https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/publications/digital-publications/study-support-and-design-skills-development-blue-economy_en

Key findings



Digitalization & Management
proficiency in **geographic information systems, data analysis, cybersecurity, and project management** has become foundational.





Green/Blue Competencies
ecosystem restoration, circular-economy practices, and sustainable resource management are increasingly non-negotiable.



the emergence of **novel roles** – **AI specialist, blue carbon advisor, marine spatial planner, energy transition manager** – that blend technical, environmental, and leadership abilities.



training remains fragmented: while webinars and workshops are widespread, hands-on apprenticeships and interdisciplinary curricula are scarce, **especially in remote regions** and cutting-edge fields like **desalination and marine robotics**.

#EU4Ocean
#Youth4Ocean
#EUBlueSchools



#EU4Ocean

EU4Ocean Coalition

Strengthening the European Ocean Literacy Community

EU4Ocean brings together people advancing ocean literacy

- By advancing ocean literacy, skills, and public engagement, it contributes directly to the implementation of the European Ocean Pact
- It integrates EU-wide activities focused on all EU sea basins: Arctic, Atlantic, Baltic, Black, Mediterranean and North Seas and involving also inland communities
- It is a bottom-up initiative involving a large spectrum of stakeholders, from blue economy actors to schools, from young ocean advocates to academia

One Coalition with 3 Communities

Partners4Ocean

for organisations, blue economy actors and civil society promoting ocean literacy

Youth4Ocean

for young people and early-career professionals who want to make a difference for the ocean

Network of European Blue Schools

for educational institutions that integrates ocean literacy and sustainability into their teaching



Cross-cutting actions

Cross-community campaigns: communication actions to showcase the essential role of ocean literacy for blue innovation and jobs

Intergenerational approach: joint events and co-creation sessions that link schools, youth, and professionals, fostering intergenerational learning and partnerships

Aligning with other key initiatives: integration of ocean literacy with policy and science processes

Impact & monitoring: inputs to the European Ocean Pact dashboard to track ocean literacy progress

#Youth4Ocean

Youth4Ocean Forum

The EU community for young people who want to make a difference for the ocean

The Forum in a nutshell

The Youth4Ocean Forum brings together ~200 young people from across Europe who care about the future of the ocean. It is a space to connect, learn, collaborate, and take action.

The Forum welcomes young people with different backgrounds, experiences, and interests: from ocean literacy and education to advocacy, science, and community engagement initiatives.

By joining the Youth4Ocean Forum, you become part of a supportive community and gain access to opportunities to grow, contribute, and get visibility.



Who can join?

- Are you between 16-30 years old?
- Are you from the EU?
- Are you passionate about the ocean and blue economy?
- Do you want to grow personally, socially and professionally with the ocean in mind?



What's in the Forum for me?

Join a European network
Connect with 200+ young people from across Europe who are engaged in ocean-related topics, initiatives, and communities.

Access opportunities
Receive information about calls, events, workshops, campaigns, training opportunities, and relevant activities.

Gain visibility
Share your work, your ideas, or your project through Youth4Ocean communication channels and community spaces.

Receive support
Access mentoring, guidance, and connections that can help you develop your ideas or next steps.

Take part in community activities
Join exchanges, webinars, events, and collaborative activities designed for and with young people.

What we do

We go to ocean events



We engage blue experts



We join EU-wide initiatives



Highlights from the community

Meet Sofia, our 2026 #MakeEUBlue Awards Winner



Discover new ocean topics with our Meet a Blue Expert series



Our session on ocean observation at EYW 2026



Engage!

Mentorship programme

Get paired with a blue economy expert to get guidance on how to best use your blue skills to break into the blue economy!

EU4Ocean Grants

Submit your entry for our annual competition and take your chance to receive a contribution to scale up your ongoing project!

Webinars & workshops

Stay connected to join webinars, Meet a Blue Expert sessions, workshops and learning activities linked to ocean literacy, blue careers, policy, science and youth action.

Euromarine’s opportunities

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Meet the EuroMarine Network!

- Access to funding opportunities
- Participation in high level events
- Bottom-up funding, promoting research on emerging topics
- Ability to network and collaborate with researchers from over 20 countries

euromarinenetwork.eu



OYSTER
Orienting Young Scientists of EuroMarine

Orienting Young ScienTists of EuromaRine

Created in 2018, OYSTER (Orienting Young ScienTists of EuromaRine) is an independent working group funded by the EuroMarine network. OYSTER is dedicated to promoting and supporting opportunities for Early Career Researchers (ECRs) in marine science.

OYSTER's Aims

Since its foundation, OYSTER has continually connected with similarly oriented groups and institutions to collaborate on common goals and actions.

Engage with and represent ECRs within the EuroMarine network.

Provide skills development, networking opportunities, and professional support for ECRs.

Develop initiatives to support and integrate ECRs within European marine research.

Contribute towards capacity building for ECRs across EuroMarine member organisations.

- Engage and represent ECRs
- Provide capacity building opportunities
- Professional support and career development

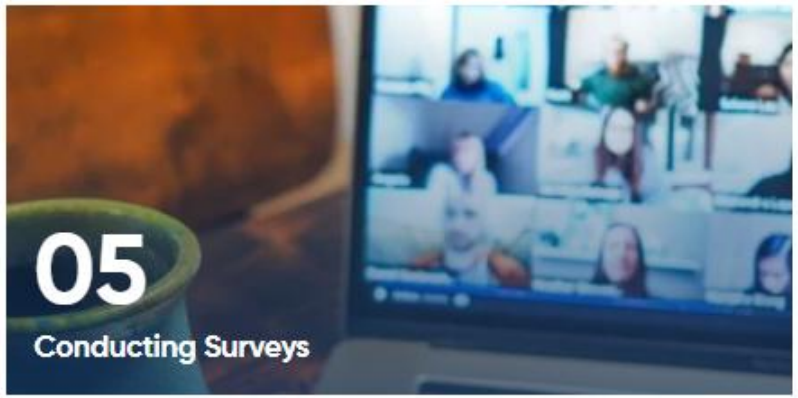
OYSTER's Activities





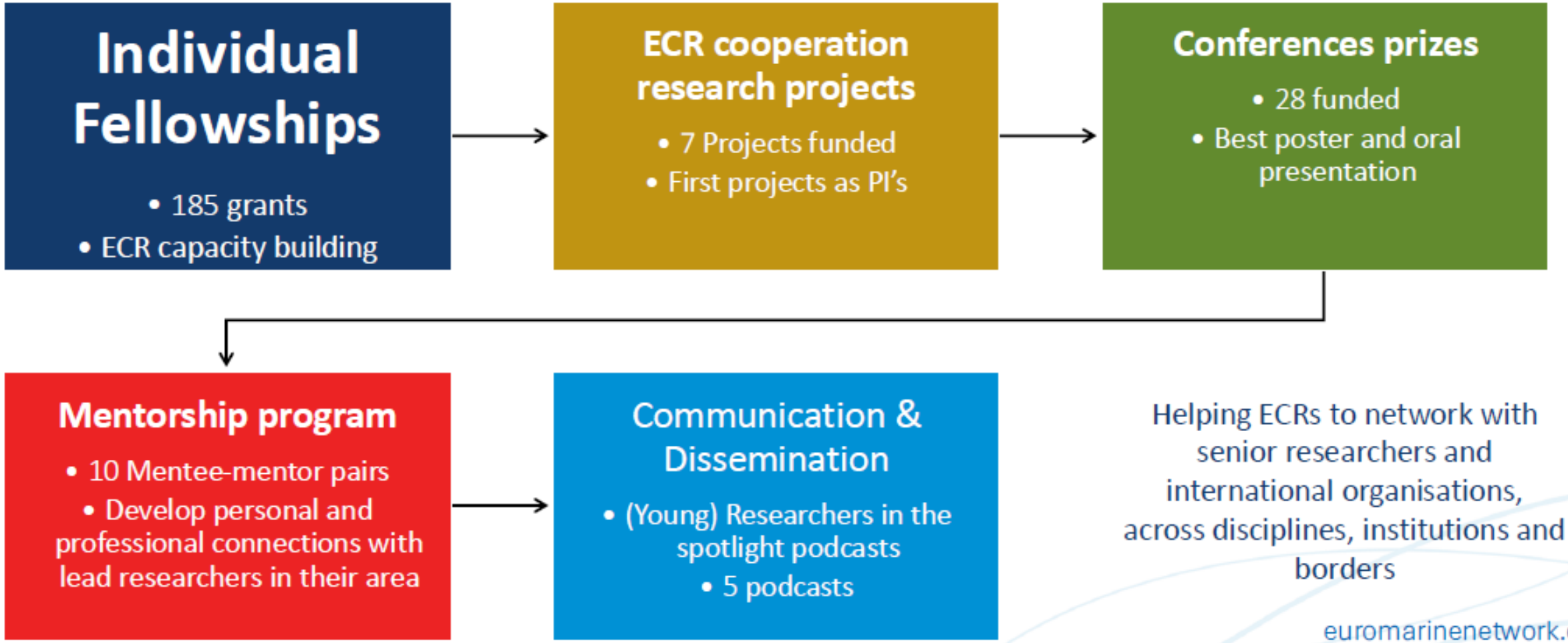






Overall impact

Created in 2018, OYSTER (Orienting Young ScienTists of EuromaRine) is a working group funded by the EuroMarine network, dedicated to promoting and supporting opportunities for Early Career Researchers (ECRs) in marine science



Helping ECRs to network with senior researchers and international organisations, across disciplines, institutions and borders



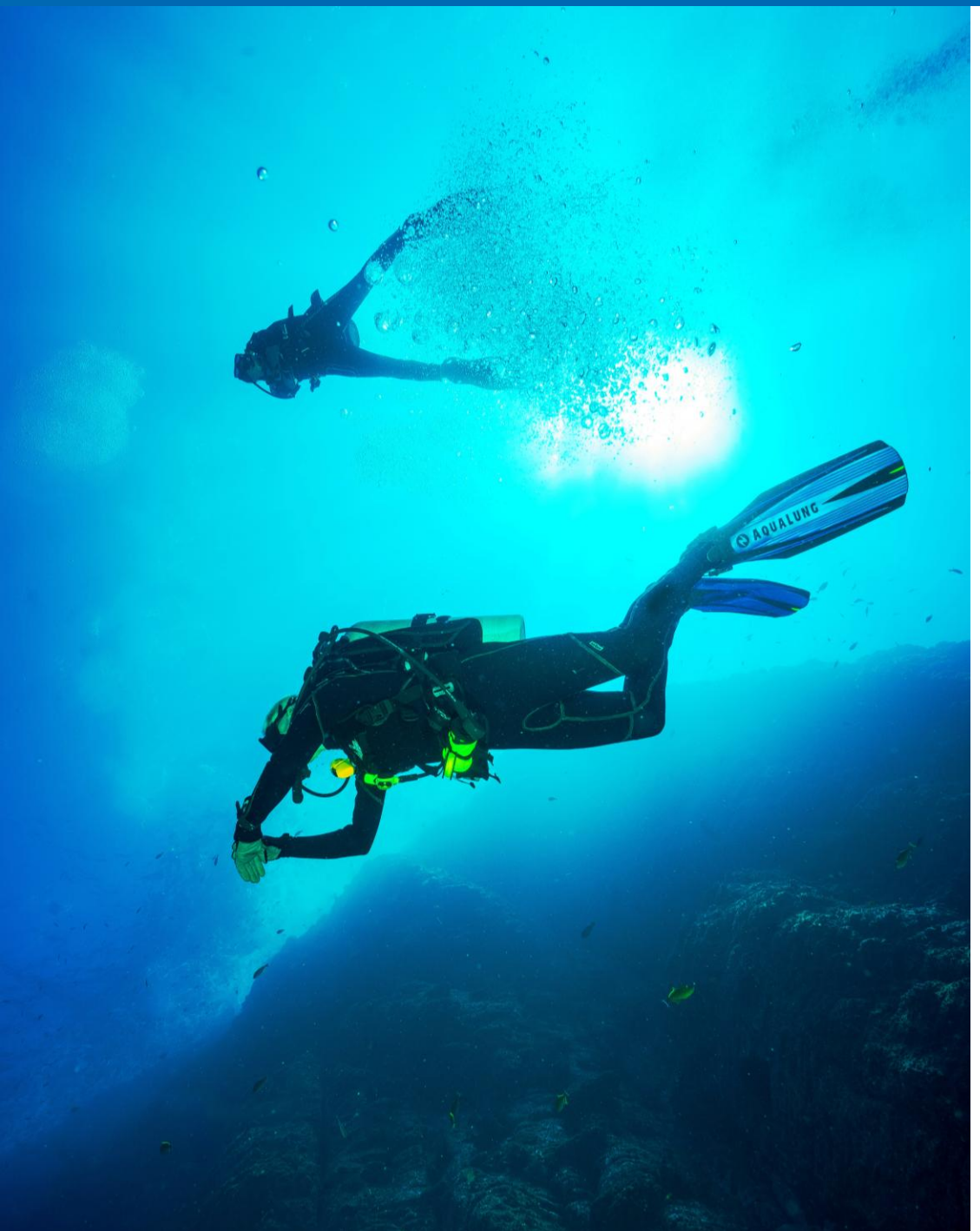
OYSTER
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OYSTER Research Cooperation Grants for EuroMarine ECRs

21.000 € total funding

- ✓ **Early Career Researchers** from **Member Organisations**
- ✓ **Original and collaborative** research project
- ✓ Funding can cover **equipment, consumables, services**, as well as **travel and accommodation**
- ✓ Led by **at least 2 EuroMarine ECRs** from **2 different countries**
- ✓ Results **presented to senior researchers** at EuroMarine's General Assembly
- ✓ Financial management by EuroMarine



OYSTER
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EuroMarine Individual Fellowship Programme

15.000 € yearly

- ✓ **PhD students** or individuals who hold a **post-doctorate position** within 5 years of their PhD belonging to a **EuroMarine Member Organisation**
- ✓ Eligible activities include **training courses and workshops**

Engagement activities - sessions and workshops for ECRs

Special session at 58th EMBS



Workshop in collaboration with TwinDEEPS project



Engagement activities





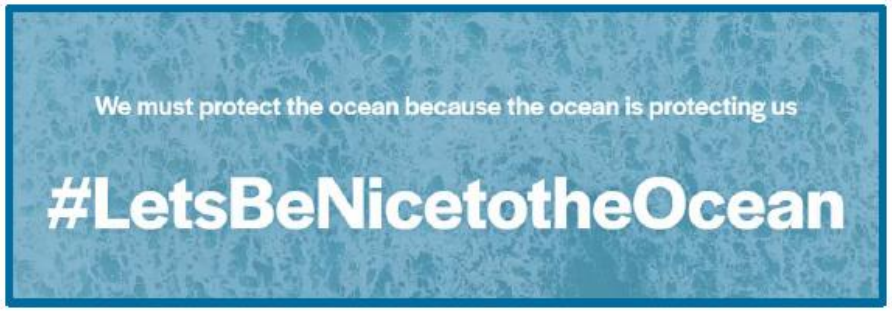




- **Collaboration with OKEANO-CSA**
- **Sponsoring the Atlantic Intergenerational Dialogues 2025.**
- **Conference prize on** "Dissemination and Mentorship package"

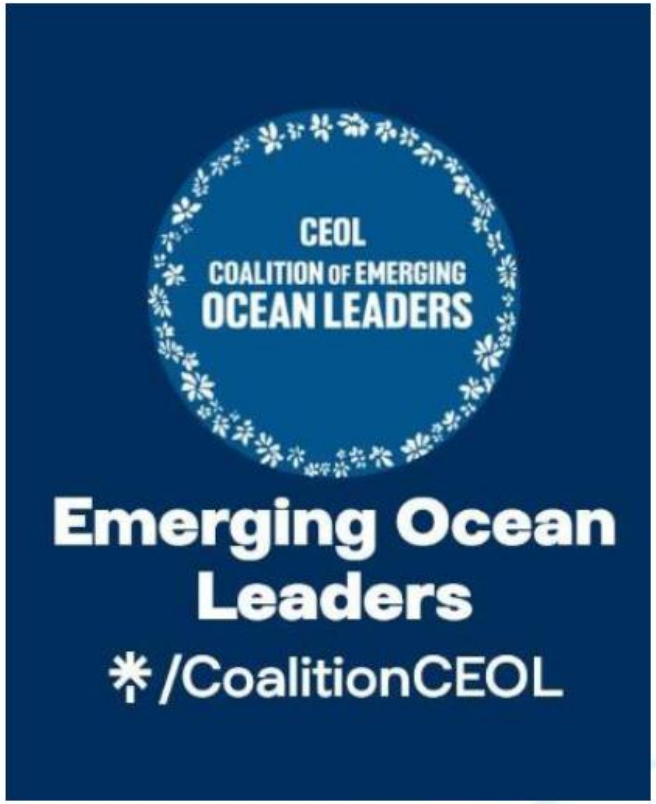
Engagement activities

Youth Networks Collaboration at **UNOC 2025**



Creation of a global youth coalition -> "**Global Ocean Youth Network**" currently with **29** global **networks**



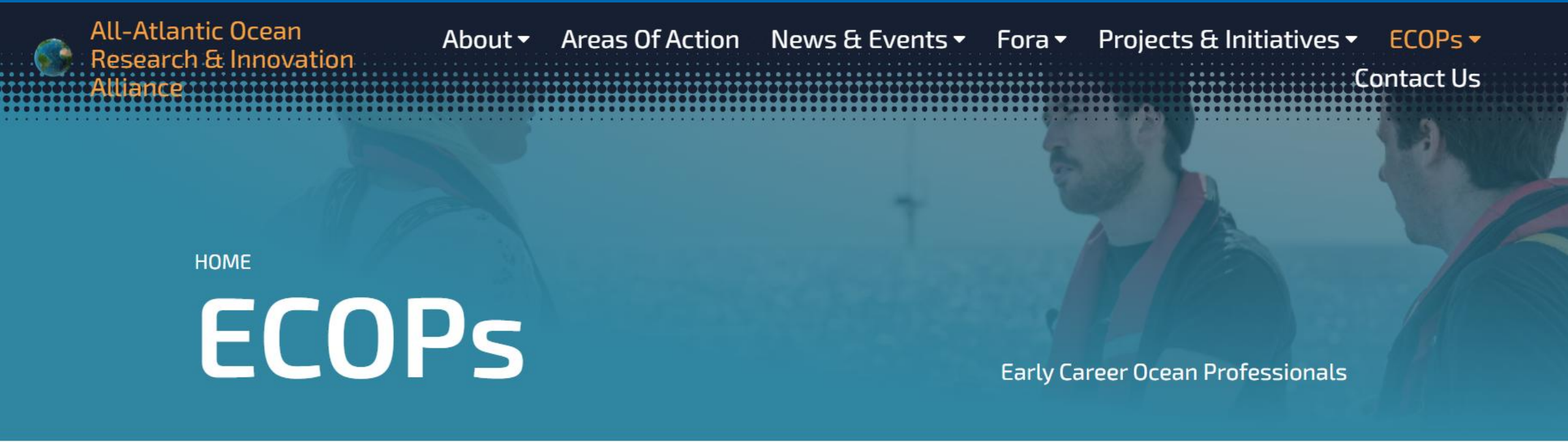


Other initiatives



Achieving "the Ocean We Want"

The Early Career Ocean Professional (ECOP) Network Programme is established to empower ECOPs, who self-identify as being early in their career in any field related to the ocean. The Programme is at the heart of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, and it was endorsed by the UN Ocean Decade as a network program in 2021.



ECOPs

Early Career Ocean Professionals

Recognizing the significant role of new generations of ocean professionals in shaping value systems, contributing valuable knowledge, and fostering an ocean-centric worldview, the **All-Atlantic Ocean Research and Innovation Alliance (AAORIA)** is committed to integrating **Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs)** into its activities. Since 2019, AAORIA has been focused on **equipping ECOPs with the skills**, education, training, and opportunities needed to drive positive change and sustainable development across the Atlantic Ocean.

Through initiatives such as the **Blue Intergenerational Programme, Summer Schools**, **Intergenerational Dialogues,** and **regular participation in AAORIA Fora**, the Alliance aims to foster a dynamic and inclusive ocean community, enabling ECOPs to actively engage in policy formulation and the implementation of **AAORIA's goals for a healthy and sustainable Atlantic Ocean**.

ECOP
Early Career
Ocean Professionals

2021 2030 United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development

All-Atlantic Ocean Research and Innovation Alliance

ECOPs

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#Youth4Ocean
#EUBlueSchools

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Global Youth Biodiversity Network

SOA
SUSTAINABLE OCEAN ALLIANCE

ECOP Network
European MARINE BOARD

EUROMARINE
EUROPEAN MARINE RESEARCH NETWORK

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THANK YOU!

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