

Press Release



BLUE4ALL Project: Co-Creating Effective, Efficient, and Resilient Marine Protected Areas for Biodiversity Conservation

Malaga, 28/09/2023

The BLUE4ALL project, a groundbreaking initiative focused on the co-creation of effective, efficient, and resilient networks of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), is set to revolutionize marine biodiversity conservation and restoration efforts. The project aims to align top-down regulatory demands with bottom-up societal expectations, bridging the gap between policy objectives and stakeholder engagement.

The urgency to strengthen marine conservation and restoration globally has prompted the need for comprehensive strategies and innovative solutions. The BLUE4ALL project recognizes this imperative and leverages the power of collaboration and co-creation to address the challenges faced in the MPA process.

At the heart of BLUE4ALL is the belief that successful conservation outcomes are best achieved when stakeholders are actively involved from the early stages of MPA design, management, and enforcement. The project establishes direct connections with 25 Information Sites and Living Labs, ensuring a tangible link to the field of MPAs and networks of MPAs across Europe. By leveraging real-world examples, the project aims to not only understand the challenges encountered but also co-develop and test new solutions where needed.

The ultimate outcome of the BLUE4ALL project will be the interactive Blueprint Platform—a guide to effective, efficient, and resilient (networks of) MPAs. This platform, applicable not only at the pan-European level but also beyond the EU, will serve as a beacon of guidance to support EU leadership in international efforts to combat marine biodiversity loss.

"We believe that the key to successful marine conservation lies in aligning regulatory expectations with the aspirations of local communities and stakeholders," said Steven Degraer, Coordinator of BLUE4ALL and Senior Environmental Scientist at Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences. "BLUE4ALL will pave the way for a new era of co-creation and collaboration in designing and managing MPAs, ensuring the preservation and responsible use of our precious marine ecosystems."

The BLUE4ALL project is driven by the need to reach and surpass global targets for protecting terrestrial and marine areas. The EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 sets a clear objective of legally protecting at least 30% of the land and sea in the EU, with one-third under strict protection. However, current assessments indicate that the European MPA network falls short of ecological targets and faces challenges such as small sizes, inadequate management, and enforcement.

By embracing a bottom-up approach and integrating stakeholders throughout the MPA process, BLUE4ALL aims to overcome these challenges and contribute to the restoration of our oceans and waters. The project aligns with the United Nations Decade of the Oceans 2021-2030, UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2031, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Sustainable Development Goal 14 on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources.

BLUE4ALL will actively engage with relevant services, initiatives, and infrastructures such as EMODNET, Copernicus Marine Service, Lifewatch, and the Digital Twin of the Ocean (DTO), ensuring the utilization of cutting-edge technologies and knowledge.

With BLUE4ALL, a new era of collaborative marine conservation is on the horizon. By empowering stakeholders and co-creating effective solutions, the project aspires to make a significant contribution to preserving our oceans and their invaluable biodiversity.

For more information about the BLUE4ALL project, visit <https://www.blue4all.eu/> or contact our communications officer at mml@submariner-network.eu.

About IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation: The Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN-Med) was created in 2001. Its aim is to influence, encourage and help Mediterranean societies to reconcile the conservation of natural resources with their use, and to establish a model of sustainable development. IUCN-Med has over 200 members in the Mediterranean region, made up of governments and non-governmental organisations.

Blue4all

Blueprint demonstration for co-created effective,
efficient, and resilient networks of MPAs.

Twitter: @BLUE4ALLproject

LinkedIn: @Blue4all