

Promoting ocean and water literacy in Schools: ProBleu Kicks Off

- ProBleu will expand and support the Network of European Blue Schools by providing more than 100 schools around Europe and Associated countries with new educational resources.
- It will help develop educational projects to enhance understanding of relevant environmental challenges such as global warming or marine pollution.
- The initiative, led by the Institute of Marine Sciences (ICM-CSIC) in Barcelona, officially started last June.

Barcelona, 26th September 2023 - The Institute of Marine Sciences (ICM-CSIC) proudly announces the official launch of the [ProBleu](#) project, funded by the Horizon Europe Programme. ProBleu is dedicated to fostering ocean and water literacy and sustainability awareness in schools across Europe and other associated countries. Commencing on June 1, 2023, ProBleu is set to **expand and bolster the Network of European Blue Schools by delivering new educational resources and granting support to over 100 educational institutions.**

The primary objective of ProBleu is to empower schools to initiate innovative educational projects that enhance comprehension of critical environmental issues, including pollution (eutrophication, plastics, etc.), climate change and overfishing.

At the heart of ProBleu's mission lies the European Union's "Restore our Oceans and Waters" Mission, which seeks to safeguard and rejuvenate aquatic ecosystems, encompassing seas, oceans, and continental waters, through research, innovation, and active citizen participation. **ProBleu aligns seamlessly with this vision, paving the way for the restoration of aquatic ecosystems.**

ProBleu distinguishes itself by advocating for **Open Schooling methodologies**, encouraging schools to engage with the broader society. This two-way collaboration between educational institutions and various stakeholders enriches curricula and pedagogical practices by fostering dialogue and sharing experiences with local entities.

Jaume Piera, ICM-CSIC researcher and project coordinator, adds, "We aim to integrate two vital resources into school curricula: one of them is the **interaction of the students and educators with researchers in the field and**, secondly, we will promote 'citizen science' wherein teaching staff collaborates with social groups to cultivate a scientific mindset, enabling society to address modern sustainability challenges." **Luigi Ceccaroni**, ProBleu's principal researcher and innovation lead at Earthwatch, one of the project's partners, emphasises, "**We want to create a stronger connection between school activities and ongoing research projects to bridge the gap between academia and the classroom.**"

ProBleu is coordinated by the Institut de Ciències del Mar (ICM-CSIC, Barcelona) and includes five more partners working together to ensure ProBlue's objective: Kaunas University of Technology (KTU, Lithuania), INOVA+ (Portugal), Earthwatch (United Kingdom), Plymouth Marine Laboratory (PML, United Kingdom) and the Ocean Conservation Trust (United Kingdom).

A Growing Network joined by Over 100 Schools

Over the course of the three-year project, **ProBleu will issue multiple calls through its website, providing financial support to at least 100 schools** to develop diverse educational and citizen science projects.

Educational institutions may apply for grants of up to 10,000 euros for projects lasting up to 12 months. The call for the first round of funding is expected to open in November 2023. Any school leader or teacher willing to know more about this opportunity can [register their school here to receive timely information about the application process.](#)

ProBleu will also create a multilingual catalogue of educational aids - including some of Europe's minority languages, fostering connections between school communities and local environmental challenges. Furthermore, it will assist schools in developing local project activities, with results integrated into global research initiatives aligned with the European Union's "Restore our Oceans and Waters" mission.

The Vital Role of Aquatic Ecosystems

The Network of European Blue Schools' overarching objective is to educate on the direct influence of aquatic ecosystems, including lakes, rivers, estuaries, seas and oceans, on society's quality of life. These ecosystems provide essential resources and services, including food and carbon sequestration. Hence, it is imperative to comprehend their functionality and champion their preservation to safeguard biodiversity.

In addition to ocean literacy, a term endorsed by the United Nations and promoted by UNESCO and the European Commission, **ProBleu extends its focus to continental ecosystems, encompassing rivers, lakes and estuaries.** Also, ProBleu **strengthens links between the educational and research communities and introduces citizen science as a powerful tool for disseminating knowledge about aquatic ecosystems among the general public.** ProBleu will provide schools with teaching guides, tools and resources, including citizen science resources such as [FreshWater Watch](#) monitoring kits and the [MINKA](#) platform.



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