

FIRST-EVER MAPPING OF MARINE CITIZEN SCIENCE PROJECTS IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

From May-September 2021, the first-ever holistic study of Marine Citizen Science projects in the Baltic Sea area was undertaken, identifying 55 on-going or recently finalised projects and analysing their lessons learned. The new report provides a major resource for those interested in pursuing and initiating further Marine Citizen Science projects in the Baltic.

Understanding the workings and responses of the marine environment to current and future pressures, is crucial for the development and subsequent implementation of sustainable development policies. In various efforts to widen the scope of research to include input from the wider public and thus non-scientists, in recent years Citizen Science is becoming more and more mainstream, including not only projects that refer to terrestrial or coastal environments, but also to a large extent those that take the marine environment as their focus.

The study consisted of targeted stakeholder outreach as well as desk research, with the support of an online questionnaire. The 55 identified projects fit the criteria of not being older than five years prior to 2021; focusing on the Baltic Sea Region marine or coastal environment; and were projects where the data collected by citizen scientists was actually used by researchers for scientific research or for exerting influence on policy-makers.

The projects that studied the category 'Species' were the most common with 13 projects, tying with the category 'Environmental variables (Other)' with also 13 projects. Marine litter was the second most chosen category, with 8 projects. For 31 projects, the data set is available online to external parties, indicating a strong potential positive continuity of Marine Citizen Science projects in the Baltic Sea Region. Numerous research projects on the European scale as well as beyond are currently on-going or are being planned, focusing on aspects of marine research such as harmful algal blooms, marine litter and other pollution, as well as for example climate change.

The study shows that the involvement of citizen scientists can be a highly valuable addition to marine research, and the Baltic Sea Region should continue to act as forerunner. The authors hope that the report and the study on which it is based, will prove a fruitful resource for those that are keen to start their own Marine Citizen Science projects in the Baltic Sea Region, and that the lessons learned may be taken on board. The report is available here: [LINK](#).

