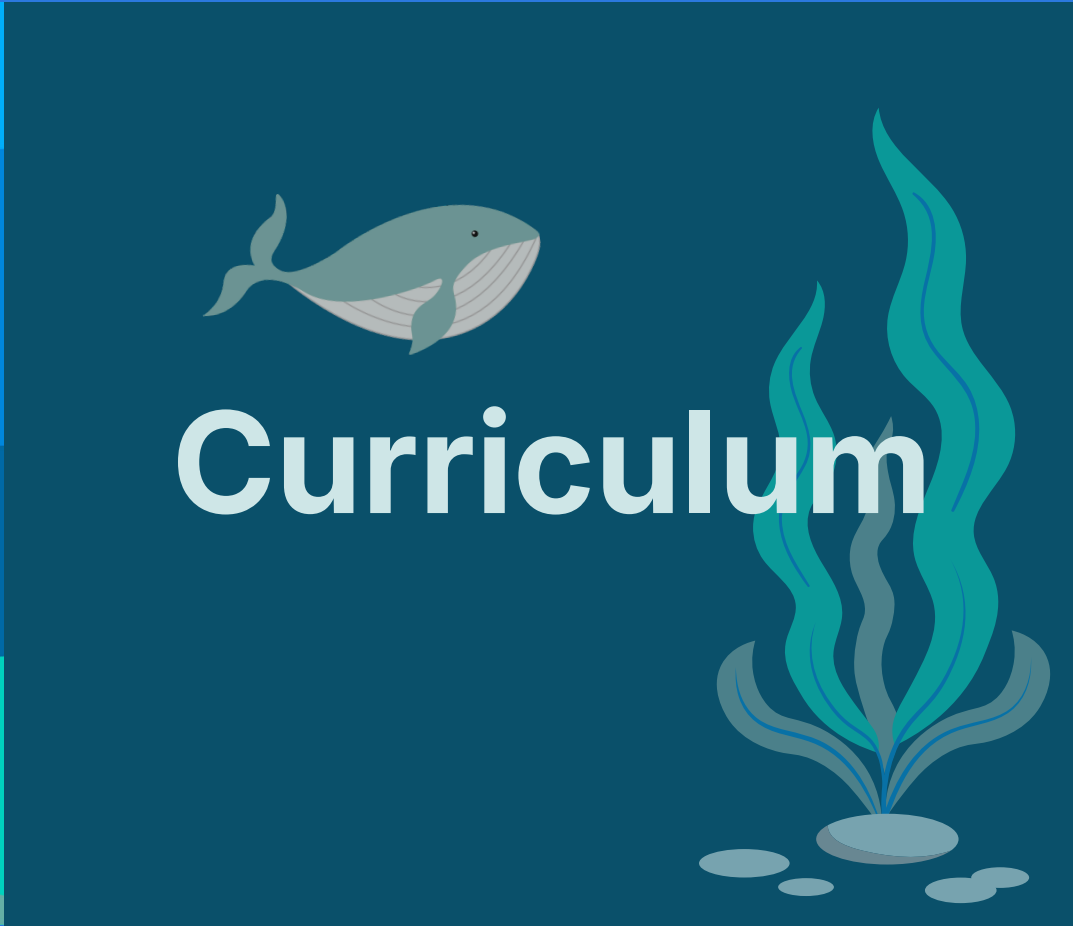




2021 United Nations Decade
2030 of Ocean Science
for Sustainable Development





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The Blue Citizen Curriculum



Knowledge (Learn) – Culture (Feel) – Governance (Act)
A Structured Learning Journey Toward Democratic Ocean Citizenship

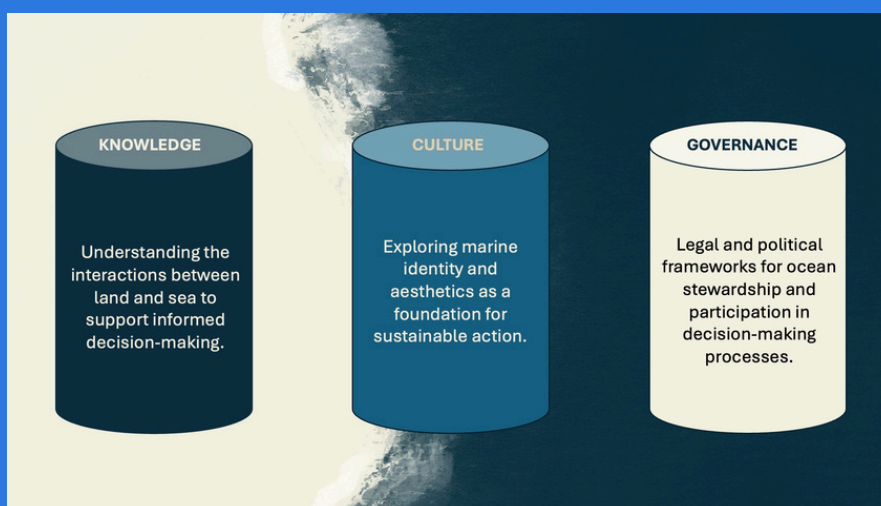
About This Curriculum

The Blue Citizen Curriculum was developed by Jan Feuring and Nina Dietz, authors of this learning framework, within the context of the *Young Citizens' Council for the Ocean*.

The Young Citizens' Council for the Ocean is a transnational youth initiative that brought together young Europeans (16-19 years) to explore the concept of Blue Citizenship — the idea that caring for the ocean is not only an environmental task, but a democratic and political responsibility. The Council emerged from the EU4Ocean “Challenge of the Year 2024” and created a structured space in which young people worked across borders to reflect, deliberate, and formulate policy proposals for more participatory ocean governance.

The Blue Citizen Curriculum reflects the pedagogical backbone of that process. It translates the Council's experience into a structured learning journey built around three pillars:

- **Knowledge (Learn):** What must I understand to act responsibly as a Blue Citizen?
- **Culture (Feel):** What is my personal and ethical relationship to the ocean?
- **Governance (Act):** What institutional conditions are required for Blue Citizens to exercise meaningful political agency?



The curriculum combined online workshops, expert dialogues, peer-led preparation, and a five-day field workshop (including travel days) at the Baltic Sea (Kiel/Heidkate). It culminated in the adoption of the Blue Citizen Compass through a qualified two-thirds majority vote.

The curriculum is developed and published by Blue Citizen e.V., a non-profit association committed to international understanding, democratic participation, and marine environmental protection. As a non-profit organisation, we are pleased to make this curriculum available to educators and learners worldwide.

If you would like to use the curriculum, we kindly ask you to send us a short message at:

youthcouncil@beabluecitizen.eu

We warmly welcome feedback, reflections, and suggestions for improvement. This curriculum is a living document, and we are grateful for insights that help us develop it further.



I. Knowledge (Learn)

What Must a Blue Citizen Know?

Ocean citizenship begins with literacy — but literacy here means more than facts. It means the ability to understand complexity, interdependence, and political consequences.

The Knowledge Pillar provided a structured foundation in ocean science, global challenges, and governance realities.

Opening Session: Ocean Literacy and Global Governance

In the first session, the Council engaged with:

Francesca Santoro (IOC–UNESCO), Ocean Literacy Expert, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission

She introduced:

- The UN Ocean Decade framework
- The concept of ocean literacy
- Global governance gaps
- The role of youth in multilateral ocean processes

This session framed the ocean as a global commons embedded in international institutional structures.

Youth-Led Thematic Presentations

A central methodological principle was that participants do not only receive knowledge — they produce and present it.

Council Members prepared and delivered thematic inputs on key ocean topics, including:

- Warming
- Plastic Pollution
- Overfishing/Exploitation
- Biodiversity Loss
- Deoxygenation
- Eutrophication
- Noise Pollution
- Acidification
- Lack of protection (governance...)
- Deep sea mining



Each presentation was followed by structured Q&A, peer discussion, and moderated synthesis.

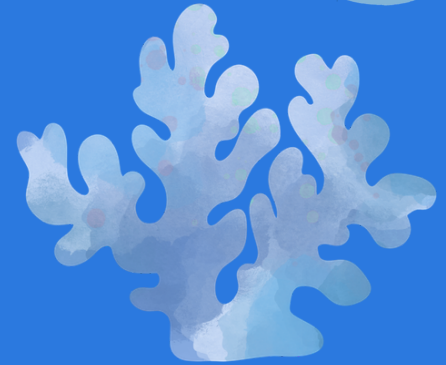


...I believe that every action we take builds on the action and knowledge of others. We cannot shape the world alone... — Farah Obaidullah



This method strengthened:

- Confidence in public speaking
- Evidence-based reasoning
- Translation of scientific content into political language
- Shared ownership of knowledge production



The “Blue Numbers” Exercise

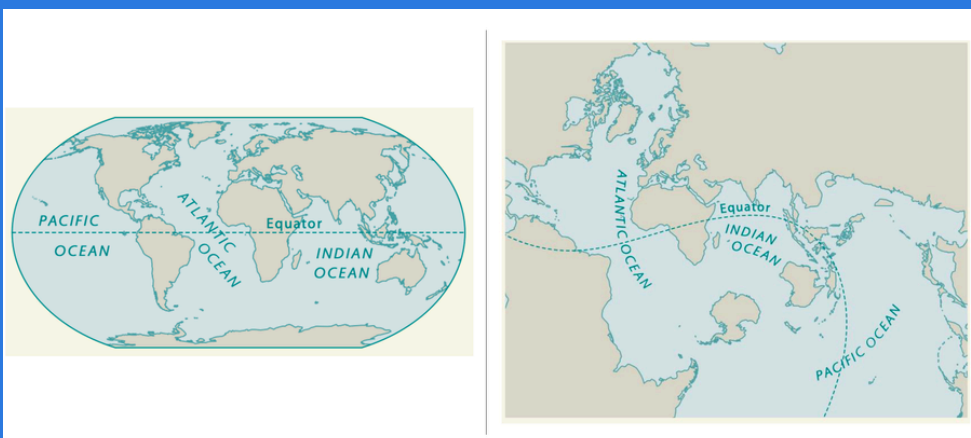
Participants collected, verified and contextualised key ocean statistics, including:

- *The ocean covers 71% of the Earth’s surface.*
- *The ocean contains about 97% of all water on Earth.*
- *The ocean absorbs about 25–30% of anthropogenic CO₂ emissions.*
- *The ocean absorbs more than 90% of excess heat generated by greenhouse gas emissions.*
- *Around 3 billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity for their livelihoods.*
- *Only about 8% of the global ocean is currently designated as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).*
- *The High Seas (Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction) make up about 64% of the ocean’s surface.*
- *Humans have visually explored less than 0.01% of the deep ocean floor.*

The purpose was not memorisation, but learning how to use data to:

- Identify policy contradictions
- Support political claims
- Communicate urgency responsibly

→ Although the ocean dominates the planet’s surface, detailed scientific exploration remains limited. Most ocean depths and species remain scientifically uncharted, illustrating the vast unknown in ocean governance and science.



Spilhaus published a world map (on the right) in the form of a square, with the five oceans and their respective seas depicted as one collective body of water.



*...We are the sea, we are the ocean. Oceania is us.
We must wake up to this ancient truth...*

— *EpeliHau’ofa*



II. Culture (Feel)

Restoring humanity’s relationship with the ocean is identified as UN Ocean Decade Challenge 10 within the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030). This challenge recognises that scientific knowledge alone is insufficient; what is required is a transformation in how humans relate to the ocean culturally, emotionally, and politically.

The Culture Pillar therefore explores three core questions:

- *What is my personal relationship to the ocean?*
- *How does the ocean shape identity, belonging, and imagination?*
- *What does it actually mean to be a “citizen” — and what does the “blue” add to that concept?*

Here, citizenship is understood not merely as legal status, but as a combination of rights, responsibilities, and participation in shaping the political community. The “blue” metaphorically expands this idea beyond national borders, pointing toward a shared, transnational responsibility rooted in ocean interdependence.

Participants engaged in:

- *Sensory exercises*
- *Personal reflections on ocean experiences*
- *Discussions on Indigenous perspectives*
- *Conversations about colonial histories and inequality*
- *Analysis of “thin” versus “thick” citizenship (after Dr. Pamela Buchan)*

Thus, participants discussed the concept of Marine Citizenship (Pamela Buchan, 2023), defined as:

“The right and responsibility to participate in transforming the human–ocean relationship for sustainability – not just through personal behaviour, but through public action and collective decision-making.”

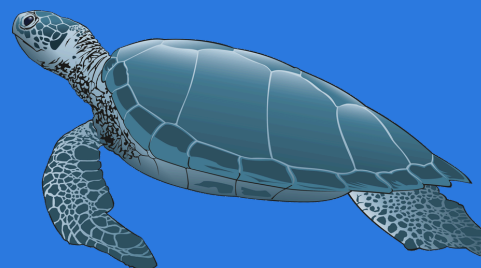
This helped distinguish between:

Thin Marine Citizenship

- Individual lifestyle changes
- Personal responsibility framed as consumer choice

Thick Marine Citizenship

- Public engagement
- Advocacy and collective action
- Participation in political and institutional processes





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...Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts... — Rachel Carson



Participants reflected on where they located themselves — and where they wanted to grow.

They also explored the idea of Thalassophilia (Buchan, 2024) — a deep emotional attachment to the ocean rooted in sensory experience and belonging.

Importantly, participants examined marine citizenship not only as responsibility, but as a matter of rights. Citizenship involves the right to participate in shaping collective decisions. Applied to the ocean, this raises questions such as:



- Who gets to participate in marine decision-making?
- Are young people included?
- What institutional spaces exist — and which are missing?

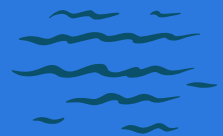
The Culture Pillar therefore served as a bridge between learning and acting. It allowed participants to connect knowledge with identity — and identity with political agency.



Participants listened to the songs of whales...



...and attended cultural events such as the International Ocean Film Tours.





III. Governance (Act)

What Does a Blue Citizen Need in Order to Act?

If Knowledge explains what is happening, Governance asks:

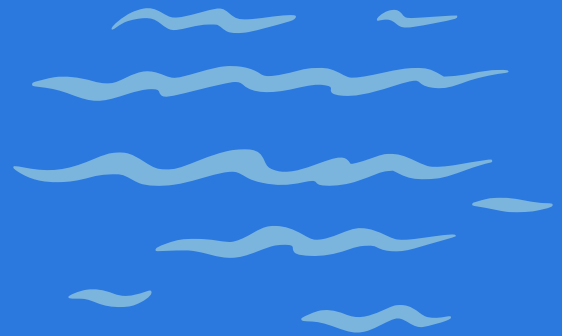
What institutional changes are required so that citizens can meaningfully shape outcomes?

This pillar moved from analysis to institutional imagination.

1. Governance Foundations and Legal Context

Participants examined:

- *UNCLOS principles*
- *The High Seas Treaty (BBNJ)*
- *Sovereignty versus common heritage*
- *Global inequality in marine resource distribution*



They worked with extracts from:

- *Prof. Chris Armstrong's work on ocean justice*
- *WGBU visions for ocean governance reform*

Written reflections were submitted prior to plenary discussions to ensure preparedness and depth.

2. Multi-Actor Role Simulation

Before engaging external experts, participants undertook a structured governance simulation.

They were divided into four actor groups:

The Visionaries

Advocating ocean as common heritage, strong environmental protection, youth representation, and institutional reform.

Nation States

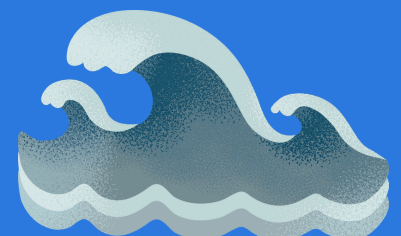
Balancing sovereignty, domestic constraints and international obligations.

Industry Delegation

Representing shipping, seabed mining, biotechnology and economic growth logic.

The Unborn Child from Tuvalu

Advocating rights of future generations and climate justice.





...We need to rethink how the benefits and burdens of ocean use are distributed...

— Chris Armstrong



Each group:

- Developed core demands
- Delivered a one-minute pitch
- Entered moderated negotiation
-

This exercise trained:

- Empathy across interests
- Understanding of structural constraints
- Negotiation under competing priorities
- Awareness of distributive justice
-

Participants experienced governance as political conflict rather than technical coordination.

3. European Governance and Marine Protection

Dr. Juliette Aminian Biquet joined to discuss:

- *The ecological function of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)*
- *Enforcement challenges*
- *The difference between “paper parks” and effective protection*
- *Governance implementation gaps*

This session translated ecological ambition into institutional design questions.

4. Ocean Data and Public Access

Nathalie van Isacker introduced the European Atlas of the Seas (EMODnet).

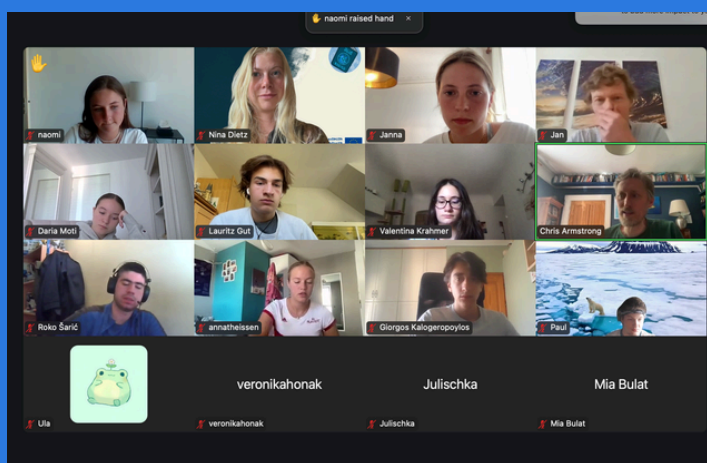
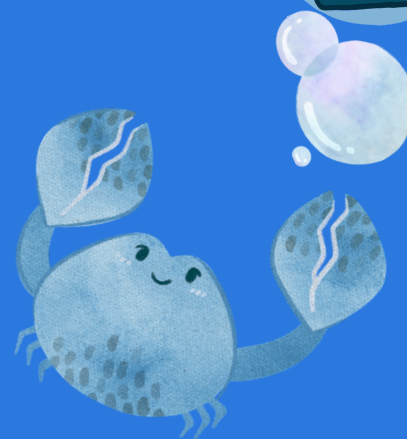
The session focused on:

- *Public access to marine data*
- *Transparency and knowledge democratisation*
- *The political implications of open ocean data*

Participants discussed how information access relates to citizenship rights and institutional accountability.

5. Justice and Institutional Reform

After simulation and preparatory text work, Prof. Chris Armstrong joined for a dedicated governance dialogue.





...The ocean is not a resource; it is a relative...

— Moana Jackson



Discussion topics included:

- *Justice principles in ocean governance*
- *The “common heritage of humankind”*
- *Global inequality in marine resource access*
- *Proposals for a World Ocean Authority*
- *Institutional innovation and democratic representation*



Participants presented their reflections and debated their emerging institutional proposals with him.



Field Workshop: Kiel / Heidkate (Baltic Sea)

The in-person workshop integrated all three pillars.

Day 1: Science, Local Governance and Narrative

Day 2: Institutional Drafting and Cultural Experience

Day 3: What is a Council? Draft Blue Citizen Compass

Pedagogical Architecture

The curriculum followed a deliberate sequence:

1. Global framing (UNESCO, science)
2. Data literacy (Blue Numbers)
3. Emotional grounding (Culture)
4. Institutional imagination (simulation, council models)
5. Expert dialogue (MPAs, justice, data transparency)
6. Iterative drafting (carousel method)
7. Democratic decision-making (2/3 majority vote)





Day 1: Science, Local Governance and Narrative

Visit to GEOMAR (Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel):

- Scientific briefings
- Laboratory demonstrations
- Discussion of research methods



Visit to Sea Level Exhibition and discussion with municipal marine policy officers:

- Kiel as a city of marine protection
- Education for sustainable development
- Local governance practice

Evening film screening:

“I Am the River, The River Is Me” followed by discussion with director Petr Lom.

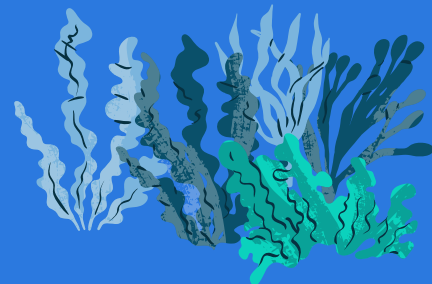
Day 2: Institutional Drafting and Cultural Experience

Morning: Ocean Challenges Collection

Collective mapping and prioritisation of pressing ocean challenges.

Iterative Compass Drafting using a rotating peer-review (“carousel”) method:

- One group drafts.
- Second group comments.
- Third group revises incorporating feedback.
- Plenary discussion follows.



Working areas:

- Principles
- Policy Recommendations
- Institutional Changes

Afternoon

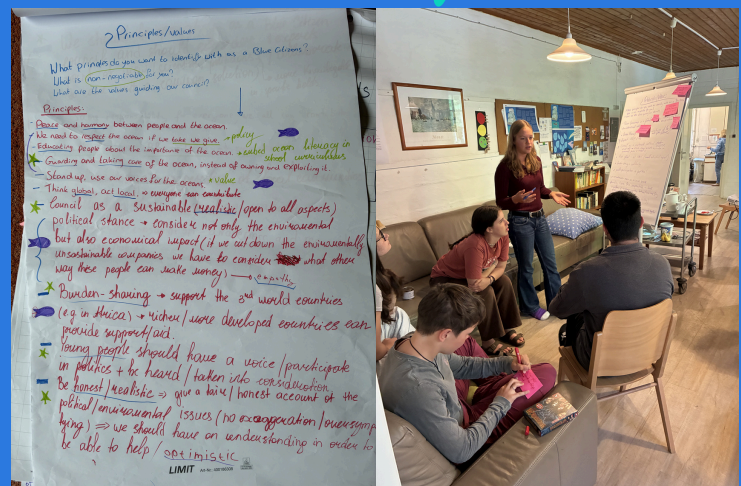
Embodied ocean experience

Windsurfing and Stand-Up Paddling.

Evening

Defining “Blue Citizen”

Individual statements followed by collective synthesis.





...You are not a drop in the ocean. You are the entire ocean in a drop... — Rumi

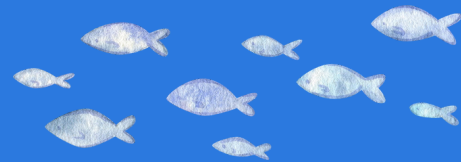


Day 3: What Makes a Council? Drafting of Blue Citizen Compass

Morning session

- Comparative council models in European education systems
- Consultative versus decision-making bodies
- Citizenship and participatory rights
- Ambition levels of youth councils

Groups refined policy and institutional proposals.



Afternoon

Intergenerational dialogue with world sailors who built and sailed their own vessel in the 1970s/80s.

Evening

Final deliberation and voting.

Each Compass element required a two-thirds majority for adoption.

Result

The Blue Citizen Curriculum aimed to cultivate:

- Scientifically literate young citizens
- Ethically grounded ocean thinkers
- Institutionally competent democratic actors

The Blue Citizen Compass is therefore not only a policy document — it is the product of a structured democratic learning process.





**Blue Citizen
Compass**

Concept Definition

A Blue Citizen can be anyone. By nature, we are all Blue Citizens — not because we choose to be, but because we are inherently connected to the ocean as citizens of the Blue Planet. Therefore, everyone has the natural right to identify themselves as a Blue Citizen.

Consequently, we aim for a political and legal understanding of Blue Citizenship — a guideline for stewardship and rights. A Blue Citizen is aware of the ocean's vital role, its interconnection with life on land, and the shared responsibility we hold across borders, ecosystems, and communities. We are dedicated to understanding the relationship between the ocean, society, and all living organisms, and we do not regard the ocean as a mere resource.

A Blue Citizen is educated about the ocean and actively shares knowledge — acting as an ambassador and raising awareness in society. We appreciate and respect the ocean as our life-sustaining engine, driven by a passion for protecting it and ensuring a reciprocal relationship with nature.

We stand up for the ocean, give voice to its needs, and take action — through community involvement, political engagement, or personal commitments. A Blue Citizen seeks justice and equality across borders, advocates for balance in giving and taking, and contributes to collective efforts to restore and sustain the ocean.

As Blue Citizens we acknowledge the fact that it is ultimately not the ocean that needs governance but our behavior towards it.

In line with Challenge 10 from the UN Ocean Decade, as Blue Citizens we believe in a healthy human-ocean-relationship that just needs to be restored.

Even though naturally rooted in our very existence on an Ocean Planet, Blue Citizenship is a conscious decision to live in respect, awareness, and responsibility — based on the belief that the ocean is not separate from us, but part of who we are.



#EU4Ocean
#Youth4Ocean
#EU4Schools

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