

COMMON DECLARATION

for the establishment of a common framework of Scientific Diving in Europe

Adopted in the context of the ScienceDIVER International Conference in Valletta, Malta, April 20th -21st 2023

The Common Declaration aims to promote the discussion for the establishment of a common framework in Scientific Diving in Europe and the enhancement of mobility of scientific divers. It is based on activities and studies carried out in the framework of ScienceDIVER project and the feedback collected from key stakeholders and target audiences. The Common Declaration was adopted in the context of the ScienceDIVER International Conference held in Valletta, Malta, April 20th -21st 2023, during which it was open to public consultation with the goal to reflect the needs of scientific divers.

We Science Divers,

Recalling

- ✓ the United Nations declaration of the decade 2021-2030 as the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and an opportunity “to generate the global ocean science needed to support the sustainable development of our shared ocean”;
- ✓ the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (Paris, 2001), suggesting in situ preservation of Underwater Cultural Heritage as first option;
- ✓ the EC Communication COM/2014/0254 about science as a key of Blue Economy and the transition from the lab to the market and the need for “scientists, engineers and skilled workers to apply new technologies and scientific knowledge in the marine environment”;
- ✓ the European Marine Board suggestion about the need for an established standardized methodology to define scientific diving qualifications in all European countries;
- ✓ the ESDP Consultation Document No.1 (Common Practices for Recognition of European Competency levels for Scientific Diving at work) proposing that “harmonization of scientific diving competencies has to be recognized within the legal framework of the respective member states and has to be represented by authorities with a clearly defined national status”.



Highlighting the need for

- ✔ the protection of the marine environment, biodiversity and underwater cultural heritage;
- ✔ considering the safety of divers during Scientific Diving projects;
- ✔ recognizing the particularity and the interdisciplinarity character of Scientific Diving and encouraging the collaboration among public and private organizations from different sectors;
- ✔ skillful and qualified underwater scientists in marine related scientific fields and industry sectors (including biology, geology, ecology, chemistry, archaeology, engineering, aquaculture and fisheries, environmental protection, oceanography, ocean renewable energy, blue biotechnology, maritime monitoring & surveillance, marine technology, topography etc.) and to recognize their contribution to innovation in blue economy;
- ✔ recognizing the contribution of non-scientists (technicians, citizen scientists etc.) participating in Scientific Diving projects with different roles;
- ✔ a definition of the Scientific Diver term according to the forthcoming ISO Standards for Scientific Diving;
- ✔ a harmonized framework and regulations for the required qualifications of scientific divers in the Blue Economy market to enhance mobility across EU countries;
- ✔ structured cooperation among actors (universities, ministries, diving associations, etc.) for the promotion, support and professional recognition of Scientific Diving at both national and EU level;
- ✔ supporting university students and young divers to cover the high costs in training and equipment required to become a scientific diver.



We believe that further steps shall include:

- ✓ the adoption of common ISO standards and of a unified training framework in Scientific Diving by international diving organizations and actors related to underwater science, diving regulations and safety, and Blue Economy industry sectors;
- ✓ the establishment of a European Board for Scientific Diving as a legal entity, autonomous and acknowledged by organizations and competent bodies across Europe, to promote Scientific Diving at EU policy level and issues related to the professional recognition of scientific divers;
- ✓ university departments to play an active role in the training of scientific divers and include training and practice courses in their curricula, so that students and young divers acquire the necessary skills and certification in Scientific Diving;
- ✓ an EU Directive to promote a unified regulation in Scientific Diving across EU to be implemented at national level, which will address training, operational and occupational aspects of Scientific Diving in order to support mobility of scientific divers across Europe in joint international scientific diving research projects;
- ✓ the creation of a Funding Mechanism to support scientific divers' skills acquisition, especially for young scientific divers, to have access to underwater equipment, certification and gaining experience.

We commit to support the goals and proposals included in the Common Declaration in our capacity.**About ScienceDIVER**

The project "ScienceDIVER: Cross-sectoral skills for the blue economy market" (November 2019-April 2023) is funded by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (Project id: 863674 – EMFF Blue Economy 2018 – Blue Careers) with partners the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki Greece, University of Calabria Italy, University of Stuttgart Germany, DAN Europe, Atlantis Consulting Greece, envirocom Germany, Marine Cluster Bulgaria.

