



Science Diver in the Blue Economy Era - International Conference

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TITLE “Towards a common legal framework for Scientific Diving. Lessons learnt and future steps”.

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ABSTRACT

In EU, the fragmented legal framework for diving has been a thorn for the seamless transformation of underwater scientific knowledge into driving force for the development of the blue economy. This problematic issue burdens the scientific diving community for decades. Although important steps have been taken place, especially the last 2 decades, there are still many barriers to overcome so that Science Divers, especially the younger ones, should not be obliged to attend and purchase expensive certifications related to commercial diving nor be misoriented with collecting recreational diving qualifications not associated with scientific purposes. ScienceDIVER project took the initiative as part of its implementation plan to bring to light the grey zones, evaluate the current situation globally - although the initial plan emphasized in very few EU countries - communicate the findings, and finally propose the next steps to allow the just transition for a better legal framework for Scientific Diving.

The communication/dissemination strategy and implementation regarding the legal framework (i.e. dedicated open workshops with the participation of experts in Scientific Diving, presentation in Scientific Diving conferences, personal communications and questionnaires among others) proved to be positively impactful. Colleagues from different countries (i.e. from EU but the rest of the world as well) offered to support the research for the legal framework in their countries and the initial database was revised and updated with data and legal documents that cannot be found easily through desk research. An additional barrier for this specific research was that in many cases, legislation framework was in different languages.

A recent advancement, that encompasses the previous among others and it is expected to eliminate the respective barriers, is the release of the new ISO standards. Members of the ScienceDIVER project participated in the development of the standards, adopted the principles of those standards during the implementation of the project activities and shared the lessons learnt from the consortium efforts as well as important own experience. Through the global application of ISO Standards, Scientific Divers will be able to have a “legal identity”. Additionally, in time, issues like the professional acknowledgement and rights will be also in line with the true operational needs that significantly support the “first a Scientist and then a Diver” principal. These issues are examined and presented in the present study.