

Message from Bedruthan

Unanimous call for a coordinated, transnational and interdisciplinary Oceans and Human Health research programme in Europe



On 20 & 21 March 2014, a group of 50 experts from a broad range of disciplines gathered in Bedruthan (Cornwall, UK) to discuss the complex interactions between the marine environment and human health. The workshop was convened by the **European Centre for Environment and Human Health** (University of Exeter) and the **European Marine Board**, with organizing support from **Ifremer**, the **Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS)** and **Plymouth Marine Laboratory**.

Human health and wellbeing are intrinsically connected to the seas and oceans.

This relationship is becoming increasingly important in light of rapidly growing coastal populations and climate change. Europe can achieve significant public health benefits through a better understanding of highly complex marine environment and human health interactions.

Oceans and Human Health – An integrative research field addressing societal needs.

“Oceans and Human Health” (OHH) represents a relatively new and integrative research field, drawing from expertise across the natural, social and economic sciences, including public health and medicine. A beneficial step-change in scientific understanding, evidence-based policy, public awareness and human behaviour is possible through:

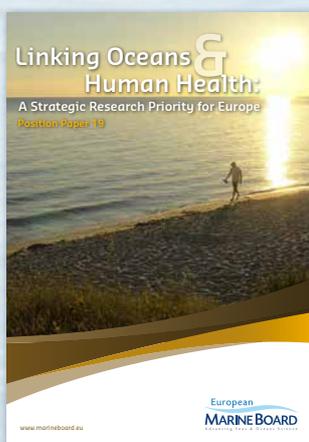
- coordinated interdisciplinary research;
- building OHH communities and capacities;
- engaging with stakeholders; and
- managing effective knowledge transfer and science policy interfaces.

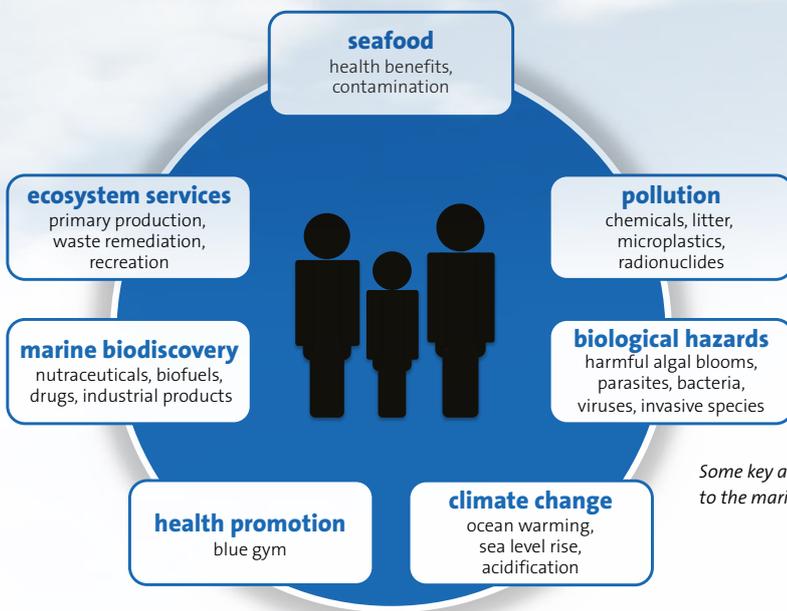
The Bedruthan workshop unanimously called for a coordinated, transnational and interdisciplinary Oceans and Human Health research programme in Europe. Research should be solutions-oriented, supporting health and wellbeing promotion and disease treatment, and informing maritime, environment, public health and innovation policy.

European Marine Board (EMB) position paper

The Message from Bedruthan follows publication of EMB position paper 19, “**Linking Oceans & Human Health: A Strategic Research Priority for Europe**”. The EMB is a partnership of 36 major national research institutes and funding agencies from 19 European countries. The paper represents a compelling endorsement from this large European research network of the societal importance for Europe of supporting coordinated interdisciplinary OHH research.

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Some key areas where benefits and risks for human health and wellbeing are linked to the marine environment.



Building an Oceans and Human Health research capacity in Europe

Dedicated funding is needed to develop and structure an OHH research effort in Europe, addressing key EU policy challenges. As a first step, a European coordination activity should address the following key goals:

1. Community Building

Develop a European community of professionals working in OHH research, connecting with policy makers, industry and civil society, including NGOs. Bring together necessary expertise not currently engaged, including public health practitioners and social scientists.

2. International Cooperation

Develop international links and partnerships to improve capacity to address both European and global OHH challenges and opportunities. Initial links with the well-developed OHH research programmes in the United States will bring benefits in line with the Galway Statement and the Transatlantic Ocean Research Alliance.

3. Strategic Analysis

Analyse the current OHH research effort and state-of-the-art in Europe, including research capacities and infrastructures, and identify research gaps and needs. Identify mechanisms to collate existing evidence and data currently dispersed across many different fields.

4. Human Capacities

Improve training and researcher mobility, and promote interdisciplinary expertise in OHH.

5. Policy Assessment and Support

Analyse the current EU policy framework, identifying policy gaps and making recommendations in support of evidence-based policy which takes account of marine environment and human health interactions.

6. Stakeholder Engagement

Improve the pathways for knowledge transfer and uptake across key OHH areas, linking with current ocean literacy developments in Europe, to achieve stakeholder and community engagement.

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 Reference: Fleming *et al.*, 2014. Message from Bedruthan. A statement from the participants of the Oceans & Human Health workshop, A rising tide of challenges and opportunities in Europe, Bedruthan, Cornwall, UK, 20-21 March 2014.
 Further information at: www.ecehh.org/events/oceans-human-health & www.marineboard.eu/ohh

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