

Whitaker Institute Policy Brief Series

Policy Brief No.: 76

November 2020

Cluster: Applied Systems Thinking

Theme: Public-Sector Innovation and Reform

Further Reading: Britton, E., McHugh, P. & Domegan, C. (2019) [Our Oceans & Human Health Citizen Conversations Summary Report](#), EU SOPHIE Project, Whitaker Institute, NUI Galway, Ireland.

H2020 SOPHIE Consortium (2020). [A Strategic Research Agenda for Oceans and Human Health in Europe](#). H2020 SOPHIE Project. Ostend, Belgium.

Contact: Easkey Britton, easkey.britton@nuigalway.ie

Patricia McHugh, patricia.mchugh@nuigalway.ie

Christine Domegan, christine.domegan@nuigalway.ie

Read More About: The SOPHIE project: www.sophie2020.eu

Funding: The SOPHIE project is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation under grant agreement No. 774567.

The content and views included in this policy brief are based on independent, peer-reviewed research and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Whitaker Institute.

Sign up to the Policy Brief Series [Here](#)

Multi-Actor Stakeholder Priorities for Oceans and Human Health in Europe

Oceans and Human Health (OHH) is an emerging meta-discipline exploring the complex and inextricable links between the health of the ocean and that of humans. This linkage between ocean health and public health emphasises an urgent need for interdisciplinary cooperation between researchers and decision-makers. A participatory and inclusive approach was advocated and adopted by the EU Horizon 2020 project SOPHIE. In 2019, dialogue forums were carried out online and in-person, engaging thousands of expert and citizen stakeholders across Europe, to identify key priorities for protecting public health and the health of the marine environment. These forums used Collective Intelligence, a systems methodology that specialises in facilitating group discussion and consensus building.

Research Findings

1,431 priorities for OHH were generated by stakeholders and were further categorised into 49 categories using paired comparison analysis. Taking all 49 priority categories together, a higher level meta-analysis revealed nine priority themes that are most influential for OHH in Europe: OHH Knowledge, Climate Action, Prevent and Eliminate Pollution, Sustainable Action, Protect and Promote Health Risks & Benefits, Culture of Care, OHH Governance, Protect Ocean Health and Invest in Blue Technologies.

Policy Implications

Multi-actor, multi-level stakeholder engagement can help reframe the interconnections with the ocean and human health in a holistic way. In addition to highlighting the need for integrated ocean and human health policy priorities and global-to-local management priorities, the nine themes present opportunities for dynamic ocean and public health solutions that foster new alliances and partnerships. As a policy planning tool, the themes can also be used by different institutions in different sectors and countries enabling decision-makers to see how combined efforts, and coordinated and integrated approaches can offer insight into the most appropriate way forward from a policy perspective.