

**Natalija Dunić<sup>1</sup>, Suzana Antunović<sup>2</sup>, Marijana Balić<sup>2</sup>, Maja Karlović<sup>3</sup>,**

**Marina Kranjac<sup>2</sup>, Marko Mlinar<sup>4</sup>, Krešimir Ruić<sup>2</sup>, Jadranka Šepić<sup>2</sup>, Marin Vojković<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries, Split, Croatia

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Science Split, Split, Croatia

<sup>3</sup> OTP bank d.d., Split, Croatia

<sup>4</sup> Hydrographic Institute of the Republic of Croatia, Split, Croatia

e-mail: [dunic@izor.hr](mailto:dunic@izor.hr)

## **Oceanographers on the Island: Bringing Ocean and Climate Literacy to Coastal Communities**

*Oceanographers on the Island* is a scientific outreach initiative launched in 2021 by Croatian ECOPs (Early Career Ocean Professionals) to bring ocean and climate literacy to children, youth, and adults living on remote islands and in coastal communities across Croatia. Based on the idea that complex science should be accessible, inclusive, and locally relevant, the initiative combines citizen science with hands-on learning. The goal is to foster a deeper connection with the sea and raise awareness of the ocean-related challenges in the changing climate of the Adriatic region.

Over the past three years, more than 40 educational events have been organized in 20+ locations, reaching over 1,000 participants - from preschoolers to high schoolers and curious adults. Activities include interactive workshops, ocean-themed board games, open-air science cafés (“*The Adriatic in a Café*”), pub quizzes, and school visits - all designed to make science accessible, inspiring, and fun. Children are encouraged to become “little oceanographers”, or at least little ocean caretakers. They build coastal protection models, release paper boats to explore currents, simulate thermohaline circulation using household materials, and discuss the importance of sea protection. In 2024, the initiative was presented at the European Commission’s *Science is Wonderful!* fair in Brussels, and was selected as a finalist for the ERC Public Engagement with Research Award.

The presentation highlights how the initiative bridges formal and informal education, integrates interdisciplinary content (oceanography, climate science, physics, chemistry, ecology), and strengthens knowledge and awareness in remote communities.

**Keywords:** ocean literacy; science communication; education in the community