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BLUEPRINT GUIDE

"HOW TO CREATE A NETWORK OF BLUE SCHOOLS FROM A GRASSROOTS APPROACH"

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Welcome Chapter

Dear **We are Blue Schools** friends,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the **BluePrint Guide**. We hope that you will reap of the benefits that come with reading this Guide and that you will be able to use it both as a forum for the exchange of innovative ideas and as a resource for current developments in your organization.

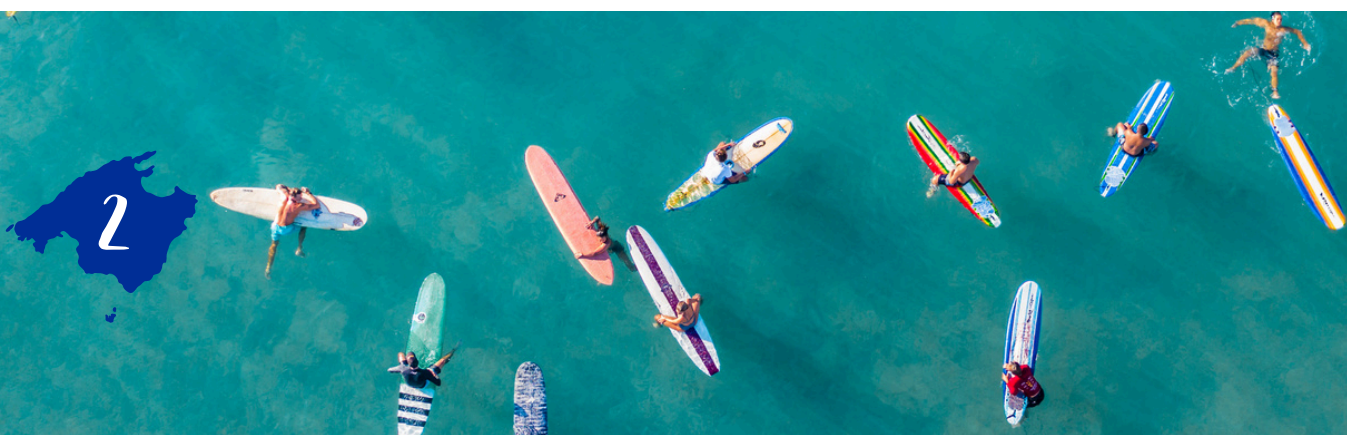
The **main idea** of the BluePrint Guide is to **provide concise information about the implementation of the We are Blue Schools project** through the experience gained in the project countries, by presenting challenges and solutions as well as best practices and advice on how other organizations can set up a network of Blue Schools **from a bottom-up approach**.

It is **aimed at other organizations**, including public administration, NGOs or SMEs that work in the field of blue education **to integrate the model developed in our project** into their own regions and context.

This guide also contains general information for communication, sustainability and transferability of the project, which **will facilitate the building of your new pathway** as you will be able to connect to other local stakeholders.

If you are **interested in collaborating with us** in a future project or would like to start your own network of EU Blue Schools in your network, you might **contact us**.

The We are Blue Schools team.



Chapter 1 - Intro & Objectives

We are Blue Schools is a **pilot project based in Mallorca**, Spain that **aims at** bringing environmental awareness and sustainability skills to **young people in schools by teaching them Ocean Literacy**.

There are other initiatives around the EU that by following top-down approaches have only reached 0.4% of the total number of schools.

The partners of "We are Blue Schools" have identified that the reason for this difficulty in the recruitment of schools is that the implementing organisations are too far removed from the actual schools and that the constraints and concerns of the schools and teachers were not researched and sufficiently taken into consideration.

Therefore, **the goal of this project was to certify 100 Mallorcan schools as Blue Schools** and enter the EU Blue School Network **by creating a true grass-roots approach** that includes teachers, schools and local environmental actors while they develop different activities related with the ocean and environmental sustainability.



Chapter 2 - The approach

Involving schools in such a process is not an easy task. Teachers have a multitude of tasks to perform on a daily basis and adding more work to their list was not an option. For this reason, **the project opted to follow a bottom-up approach.** This approach increased collaboration and communication between the schools and the We are Blue Schools team.

In this way, **the project established a close relationship with the teachers** in charge of carrying out the activities, facilitating dialogue and the resolution of doubts and possible concerns.

In a first step, **the team started researching schools on the island and contacted them to inform about the project** and the possibility of becoming a blue school. This had an effect on certain schools that are very interested on environmental issues, but the number was rather low.

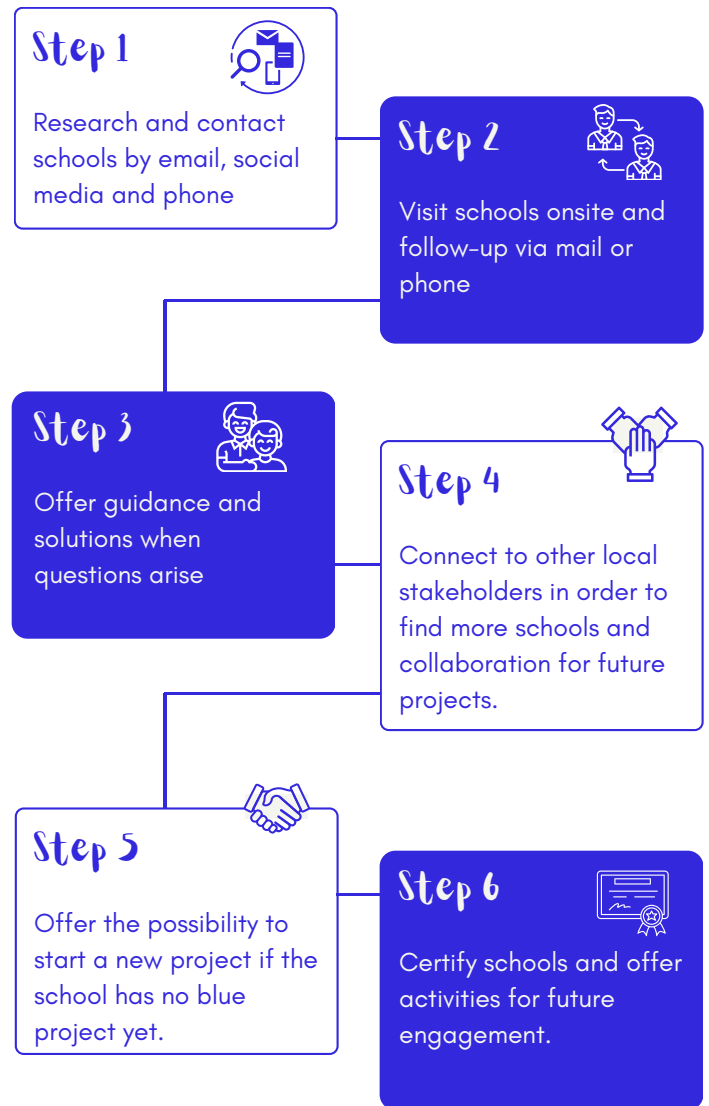


Figure 1. Bottom-up approach process

Chapter 2 - The approach

Therefore, **the second step was to visit schools and research more about their own projects**, as the team realised that many schools had already carried out activities that could be validated for certification. This created a greater impact and engagement in the schools and the number of blue schools increased.

This grassroots approach was reinforced by **the strategy developed for schools that wanted to become a blue school but hadn't started a blue project yet**.

This strategy was aimed at **involving companies, environmental NGOs, local**

governments, media, and the schools themselves in order to create a Blue **impact** not only in the school but **in the region**. This model also helped the organisation of the school outdoor's events and the finance of certain costs by companies or governments such as transport costs, water sport tools and devices such as SUPs, and healthy snacks or prizes for the students.

By bringing an environmental NGO's into the project, the teacher can also rely on their know-how about the ocean and learn from them in case the subject they teach does not include the ocean as such in the curriculum.

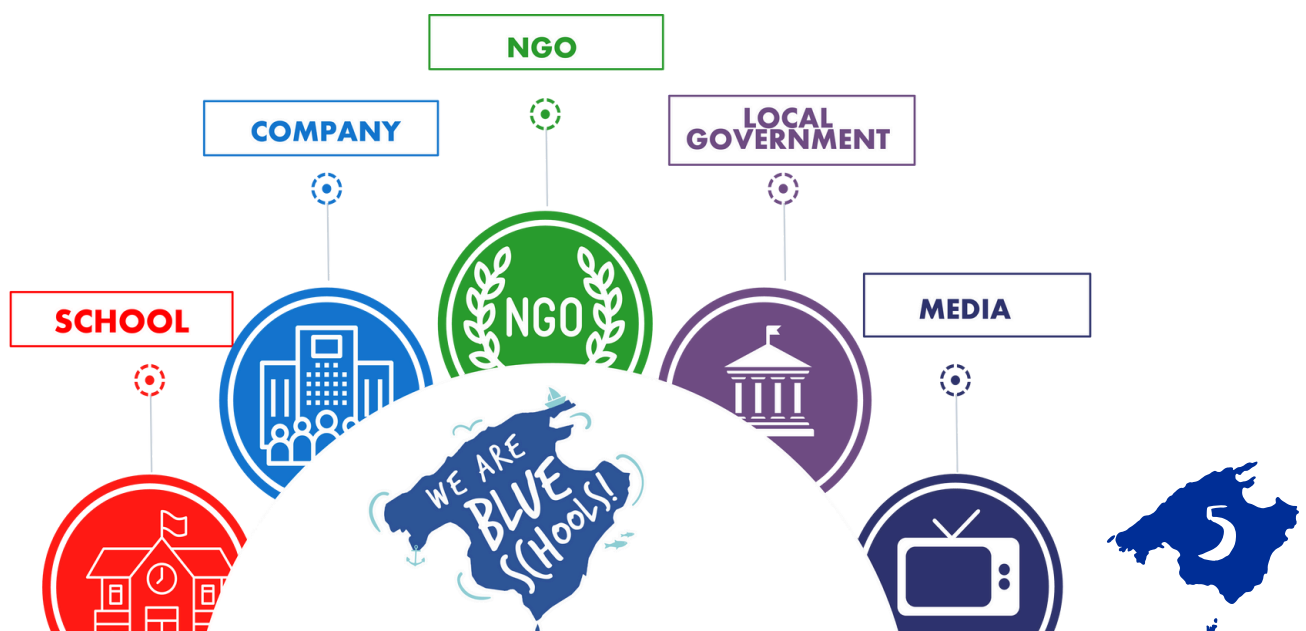


Figure 2. New Blue project strategy

Chapter 3 - The manual

In order to become a Blue School, schools must complete certain activities to meet a minimum set of requirements. Teachers have busy schedules, and to make the process easier to understand, the project developed a manual summarising the requirements, providing ideas for activities, and practical examples.

The manual set out the 5 minimum requirements that every school has to meet in order to become a European blue school, these are:

1. Develop a project with interlinked activities
2. Produce a clear output
3. Involve all students of the entire school
4. Collaborate with a local partner
5. Communicate project results.

There were schools that had already carried out certain activities related to the sea and biodiversity, and all they needed to do was to clarify some aspects

To this end, support was offered while promoting activities on the project social networks and providing them with different solutions in terms of contacts with external agents.

One of the options was to connect them with another school to communicate their results and activities and create a greater impact. Another idea was to involve tourists due to their presence on Mallorca.

All this together resulted in a large number of schools being prepared to obtain their blue school certificate.



Figure 3. The We are Blue Schools Manual

You can download the manual by [Clicking here](#)



Chapter 4 - Implementation

The implementation process started with a full school research process, where the team made a list of more than 300 schools divided into 4 different groups: public primary, public secondary, private schools and cooperative schools. This process also involved the research of every single school characteristic, including learning approach, distance to the sea, previous collaborations with environmental NGOs and Marine research centres, and participation in projects such as Let's Clean-up Europe. The schools websites and the official social media accounts also played a vital role.

Once all schools were contacted, **an online webinar was organized to explain the process and give them the opportunity to ask questions** and share their own experiences with the team.

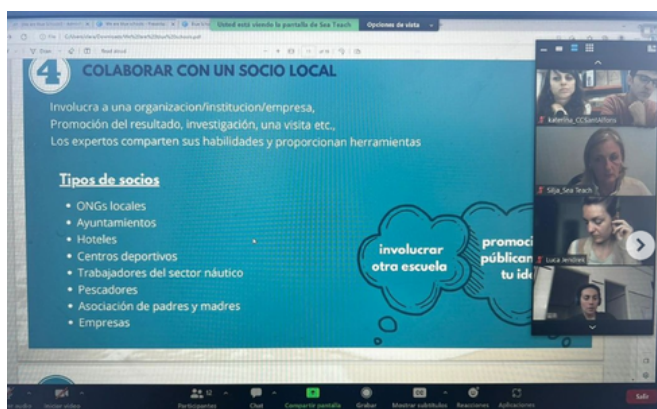


Figure 4. The online Webinar

In this way, the schools became familiar with both the project and the team itself, which created a close relationship that facilitated the process of obtaining the certificate. In a next step, the team conducted an in-depth one to one contacting process with the schools that appeared in other ocean literacy related projects (e.g. Posidonia in the Classroom), and applications started to come in.

Furthermore, **the team encountered schools that had not carried out any sea-related activities to date. In these cases, the team offered individualised meetings to explain the certification process, and to develop their projects together with them from scratch**, while putting them in contact with NGOs and institutions to help them carry out different activities related to biodiversity, sustainability and environmental impact.

Some of these projects that started together with the We are Blue Schools project are as follows:



Case Scenarios



Upcycling Microplastics

IES Alcudia

To celebrate World Environment Day, students, teachers, a hotel company, the municipality and 2 NGOs worked together to clean up a beach in the area of Muro from Microplastics. During the event, students classified the plastics, learnt about microplastics and how everybody can make a difference and take actions.

During the afternoon, students attended a workshop where they could re-use the collected plastic and create something new. With this activity, IES Alcudia got certified as a Blue School



Who was involved?

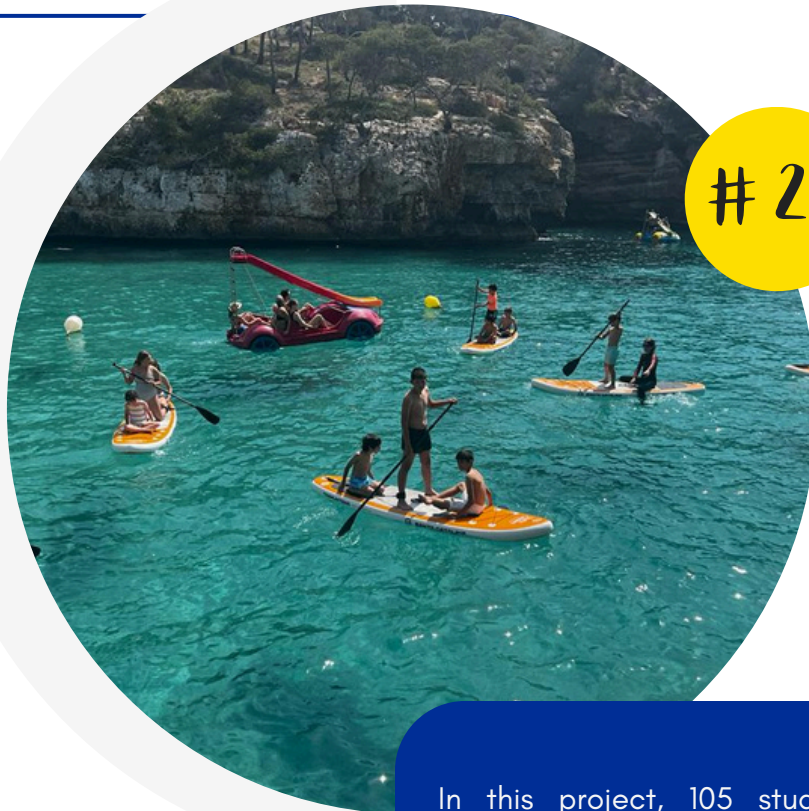
Clean Boating

Garden Hotels

Sostenible XXI

IB3 - TV

Case Scenarios



Let's clean up our coastal environment

CEIP Mare de Déu
de la Consolació

In this project, 105 students and 10 teachers participated in a beach clean-up event in mode of a competition. Two groups had the mission of cleaning up the sea, 2 other groups the rock area while the students of kindergarten were in charge of the sand area. In this project, the city council helped with financing transport and prizes for the students, a hotel company provided snacks, and two water sports companies provided material and staff.

Who was involved?

Clean Boating

Santa Cat. SUP

Aj. Santanyí

Hotel Pinos Playa



Case Scenarios



Palma Int. Boat Show IES Binissalem

In this project, the Balearic Government offered free entrance to all students and teachers to the annual edition of Palma International Boat Show. During the event, students learnt from the NGO Clean Boating what the last developments are in terms of sustainability in the nautical sector. Teachers had previously worked on some research questions and the results of the project was the development of a learning situation for other schools to follow.



Who was involved?

Clean Boating

PIBS

Govern Balear

Nautical SMEs

Chapter 4 - Implementation

Certification Ceremonies

In order to further engage with schools, it is crucial to organize onsite events where they can receive the Blue School certificate that validates the work teachers and students have been doing during the school year. It is also a chance to interact with other schools, learn from other projects and exchange experiences.



Figure 5. Teachers during the 1st ceremony

Tip! try to bring together as many schools as possible and invite, at least, 2 teachers per school. This will create a greater impact in the region through a snowball effect, as after the ceremony teachers will communicate the outcomes of the ceremony, and its success.

Follow-up events

Once schools are certified as Blue Schools, teachers will have many questions. These include:

- I'm a Blue School, what now?
- How can I do further activities?
- How can I collaborate with other schools or local stakeholders?
- How do I edit my website on the EU maritime forum?

Try to organize a more events to bring schools and interested stakeholders together again. Meeting in person will allow you to answer common questions while engaging with more schools and gaining visibility.



Figure 6. Teachers during the 2nd ceremony

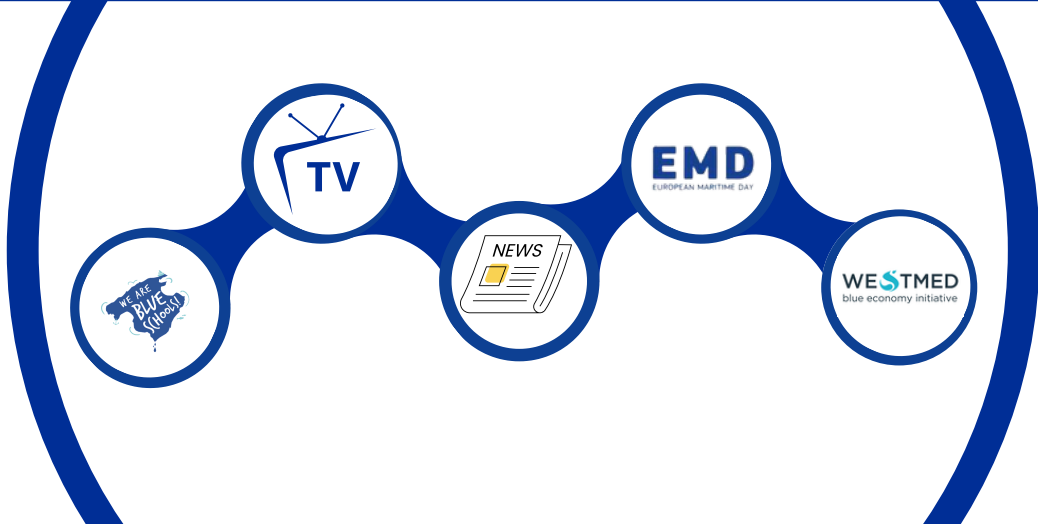


Chapter 5 - Impact & Communication

Promoting the project and its results is essential for a successful project. Through social networks and media a larger number of people can be reached while increasing the public engagement with the blue schools movement. Thus, **at the beginning of the project there was a target of 5000 followers**, likes and visitors on the project social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn) and the website.

Thanks to the team efforts in keeping social media active and promoting the project on a larger scale with international conferences, newspapers, radio and TV programmes, **KPI's were met 9 months after the project started**. This helped boosting the blue schools movement on Mallorca and beyond. Want to know the numbers reached? Have look at the following table.

Social Media and Webpage	4.000
Radio and TV	103.000
European Maritime Day	1.600
WestMed Conference	110
Press Releases	73.000
Total people reached	181.710



Chapter 5 - Impact & Communication

An essential part of the success of this project is due to the research of the implementation team in social networks and websites of the schools and institutions of the island in search of synergies with the project. In this way the team met research centres that organise school visits to teach about marine biodiversity and environmental preservation.

The team also received support from hotels and water sports companies that organised beach clean-ups with the schools, involving tourists to generate a greater environmental impact.

To increase our reach and spread the mission of the blue schools movement the team has signed two collaboration agreements with research entities on the island, SOCIB and Aula de Ecologia Marina, and in September the team will sign an agreement with the Maritime Museum of Mallorca.



Figure 7. Garden Hotels staff working together with tourists and students from IES Alcudia.

To promote the results and the effect of the project on the island, the team attended conferences and maritime events where the team presented the results and learned about other similar initiatives. Networking and promoting "We are Blue Schools" offers the opportunity to increase engagement and follow up, especially on social media. Based on the experience and feedback the team can mention the success of the bottom up approach, especially in educational projects involving primary schools and high schools.

Chapter 5 - Impact & Communication

Similarly, showcasing success stories, such as those mentioned above, helps to exemplify and familiarise the public with the Blue Schools movement, increasing interest and motivation for replication. All of this translates into greater outreach, a greater number of blue schools nationally and internationally, and a greater positive impact on our oceans and environment.

European Maritime Day (EMD)

The Team had the opportunity to attend the European Maritime Day conference based on networking, discussing and outlining joint action on maritime affairs and sustainable blue economy.

As We are Blue Schools is a project aiming at having a direct impact on our maritime environment and sustainability, this was the perfect opportunity to present and promote the results and approach.



Figure 8. Presentation at EMD

Reeducamar Conference

In early June the team was invited to present the project during the Reeducamar conference held by the Spanish Ministry of ecologic transition in Segovia. During the event, the team had 20 minutes to organize a workshop to get ideas on how to engage schools that are located in inner areas, far away from the sea.



Figure 9. Reeducamar attendees

Chapter 5 - Impact & Communication

WestMED Project Awards

Another amazing opportunity the team has had is attending the WestMED project awards. This international project competition highlights and rewards outstanding success stories as they provide innovative and replicable solutions that embody the vision of the WestMED initiative for the Western Mediterranean. The Team presented We are Blue Schools and won the Skill development and circulation award.

After that the team qualified for the second round of Best of the Best WestMed project of the year 2023. The team had 5 minutes to present the project and its main outcomes and after emphasising our bottom up approach and the ability to be sustainable in the long term and the opportunities for replication on an international scale, the team won the award for Best of the Best WestMed project of the year 2023.



Figure 10. Receiving the awards from the DG Mare
You can watch the winning moment by [Clicking here](#)



Figure 11. Pitching session.

You can watch the project pitching by [Clicking here](#)

Chapter 5 - Impact & Communication

Radio and TV

In order to promote and reach a wider audience, the team participated in 3 radio and 3 television programmes. In this space the team had the opportunity to involve 10 schools so that the students themselves could talk about their own experiences and learning processes. In this way the team was able to give voice to small projects that created a direct change and impact on the environment and in the school curriculum.

With this strategy, the team also managed to reach institutions and companies that were interested in the project and financed part of the activities of certain schools, thus facilitating its implementation and guaranteeing its success. Similarly, the team reached out to NGOs who provided students with their know-how about Ocean Literacy.

Finally, in order to promote the project at local and regional level the team had the support of various city councils which provided visibility to the projects.



Figure 12. Students and teachers on the radio.

You can listen to the full program by [Clicking here](#)



Figure 13. Students and teachers on TV

You can watch the full report by [Clicking here](#)



Figure 14. Students and teachers on the radio.

You can listen to the full program by [Clicking here](#)

Chapter 5 - Impact & Communication



Figure 15. Attending the program *Pasión por el mar*.

You can listen to the full program by [Clicking here](#)



Figure 16. Students participating in *Gent de la Mar*

You can watch the full report by [Clicking here](#)



Figure 17. IES Alcudia on the regional News.

You can watch the full report by [Clicking here](#)

Newspapers

Local and regional newspapers also found the We are Blue Schools project interesting and published a series of articles related to the various actions carried out around the island of Mallorca and the WESTMED Award. Newspapers like *Diario de Mallorca* with more than 73.000 daily readers of their paper version was one of the interested parties.



Figure 18. On the newspapers

You can read the full report by [Clicking here](#)



Chapter 6 - Sustainability and Scaling up

Certifying 100 schools in a confined area like Mallorca, has created an impact on 15.000 students approximately, 500 teachers, and a relevant number stakeholders that have participated in the projects such as NGO's, local governments, companies and media. This fact has caught the attention of other companies, initiatives, NGOs, research centres, and governments to offer their support or services to the schools. In order to be able to manage and organize all these activities for future school years, finance is needed as once schools are certified as blue schools, they need to continue to carry out activities. Therefore, in order to find finance the team conducted meetings with:

- stakeholders met during EMD and WestMed
- Interested local and international actors
- Local/regional government.

Apart from finding finance, these meetings were meant to:

- expand to other regions and countries, where we received interest for replication in mainland Spain and the Canary archipelago, north Africa, Malta and the Baltic Sea.
- Align synergies with other OL projects.
- Find educational resources and activities for the certified schools.

Interests and meetings like these can be used to pursue new collaborations and apply for new projects and and follow-on finance.



Figure 19. Possible WestMed Expansion



Figure 20. Beach clean-up event with 4 Blue Schools



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