

NEWSLETTER

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LIFE CONCEPTU MARIS

LIFE20 NAT/IT/001371

"CONservation of CEtaceans and
Pelagic sea TUrtles in Med:
Managing Actions for their
Recovery In Sustainability",

The project is supported by the
financial instrument of the
European Union, for the
environment:
the LIFE Programme.



Partnership: ISPRA, Capo Carbonara
MPA, CIMA Research Foundation,
CMCC Climate, ÉcoOcéan Institut,
Anton Dohrn Zoological Station,
Triton Research, University of
Milano-Bicocca, University of
Palermo, Universitat de València,
University of Turin.



IMPORTANT PROJECT STEPS HAVE BEEN ARCHIEVED:

Thanks to the dedication and
hard work of our partners over
the past three years, we have
successfully produce key
documents, achieving and in
some cases even exceeding,
project's objectives.

GREAT RESULTS FOR LIFE CONCEPTU MARIS PROJECT

Some numbers...

In 3 years of project:

- 15 ferry routes tracked
- 63,000 km of transects

Sightings recorded:

- 2198 sea turtles
- 4150 cetaceans
 - 1870 striped dolphins
 - 1140 fin whales
 - 345 bottlenose dolphins
 - 116 Cuvier's beaked whales
 - 108 sperm whales

Data collected

- 127 eDNA samples
- 1188 isotope samples
- 495 Key environmental variables
- 90500 sensor data

Citizen science

- > 400 applications
- 225 people completed theoretical training
- 122 on board training



DATA ACQUISITION ON CEPTU SPECIES, MARINE LITTER, MARITIME TRAFFIC, AND EDNA SAMPLES IN THE REPLICATION AREAS IN WMED AND ADRION REGIONS

Leaded by ISPRA and UV, with the collaboration of MPACC, CMCC, SZN, UNIMIB, UNIPA.

DELIVERABLE E2.2

MILESTONE C1.1b

The documents outline the systematic data acquisition efforts of the Conceptu Maris (CM) project focused on marine biodiversity—specifically cetaceans, sea turtles, marine litter, and maritime traffic—along fixed ferry routes in the Mediterranean Sea. Data collection occurred from 2022 to 2024, using both visual (direct observation) and non-visual (eDNA and isotope analysis) methods.

Key points:

- **Study Areas:** C1 focused on the Tyrrhenian Sea (Core Area), while E2 included broader regions (western Mediterranean and Adriatic).
- **Methodology:** Standardised protocols were used and enhanced with new technologies. Data collection occurred onboard ferries.
- **Historical Integration:** A major part of the work was harmonising and integrating 15 years of data (2008–2021) from the **FLT Med Net project** with new CM data.
- **Database Creation:** A structured Common Database was developed, following FAIR principles, and is hosted by ISPRA within the National Biodiversity Network.
- **Data Harmonization:** Included data cleaning, labeling corrections, formatting, and geographic alignment.
- **Outputs:** Summary statistics and an interactive dashboard provide insights into spatial and temporal trends across the Mediterranean Sea.

The result is a robust, standardised, and accessible dataset that enhances marine monitoring and conservation efforts.

For more details

LIFE CONCEPTU MARIS DELIVERABLE E2.2



REPORT ON TRAINING COURSE & QUESTIONNAIRE

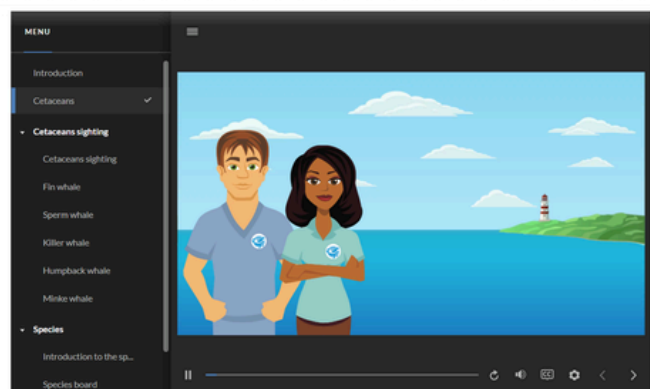
Leaded and realized by CIMA

DELIVERABLE C3 (output to be used for Delivery C2)

This deliverable highlights significant progress in awareness and capacity building, laying a foundation for long-term conservation of marine megafauna in the Mediterranean. It details a comprehensive initiative aimed at mitigating ship strikes involving cetaceans and sea turtles in the Mediterranean Sea. The project developed and implemented a bilingual e-learning training course for maritime professionals and launched a structured questionnaire to assess knowledge, experience, and attitudes regarding marine megafauna and collision risks.

Training Course

- **Format:** Asynchronous e-learning course hosted on the CIMA Foundation's Moodle platform, supplemented with multilingual printed materials.
- **Audience:** Primarily crew members of shipping companies (Corsica Sardinia Ferries, GNV, Grimaldi Lines, Balearia, others), with additional outreach to the general public via the project website.
- **Engagement:** By Jan 2025, 307 individuals were enrolled from shipping companies, with a 77% completion rate among active users. Certificates were issued to 121 participants.
- **Feedback:**
 - 94% had never attended similar training.
 - 67% found the course useful for their work.
 - Most appreciated modules: species identification and ship strike prevention.
 - 92% felt more prepared at sea; 98% would recommend the course.



Questionnaire

- **Participants:** 104 responses, mostly from Italy, with a mix of shipping professionals and general stakeholders.
- **Findings:**
 - 67% worked in fields related to cetaceans/turtles; 60% onboard vessels.
 - 60% of marine professionals had never received formal training on collision risks.
 - Encounters with marine animals were common; 60% of marine personnel reported frequent sightings.
 - Only 7% had experienced a cetacean collision; 2% reported turtle collisions.
 - Majority recognised ship strikes as a serious risk to both cetaceans (90%) and turtles (89%).



Mitigation Measures – Perceptions & Ratings

- **Most supported measures** (mandatory, effective, feasible, and non-disruptive):
 - Training courses
 - Observers onboard
 - Real-time animal reporting
- **Controversial or less feasible:**
 - Speed restrictions
 - Seasonal re-routing
 - Altered shipping routes
- **Marine personnel emphasized practical tools and real-time response as critical.**



REPORT ON THE RESULTS OF THE CITIZEN SCIENCE CAMPAIGN

Leaded by MPACC, with the collaboration of all partners

DELIVERABLE E4

The Citizen Science (CS) Campaign aimed to enhance understanding and conservation of cetaceans and sea turtles (CEPTU species) in the Mediterranean Sea by involving the public directly in marine monitoring activities.

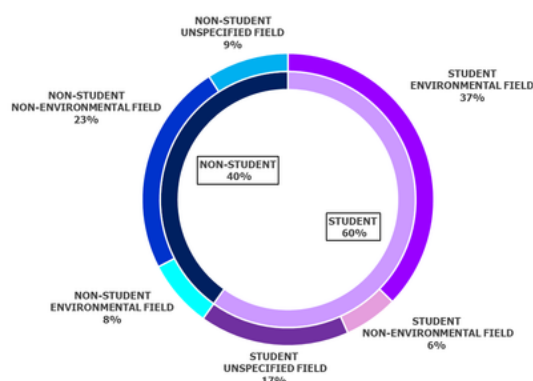
Between 2023 and 2024, the project invited citizens from across Europe to become active participants in marine monitoring efforts, joining experts on ferry routes across the Mediterranean to observe and record sightings of cetaceans and sea turtles. The idea was simple but powerful: if we want to protect marine life, we need to involve the people who share the sea—whether for work, study, or leisure.

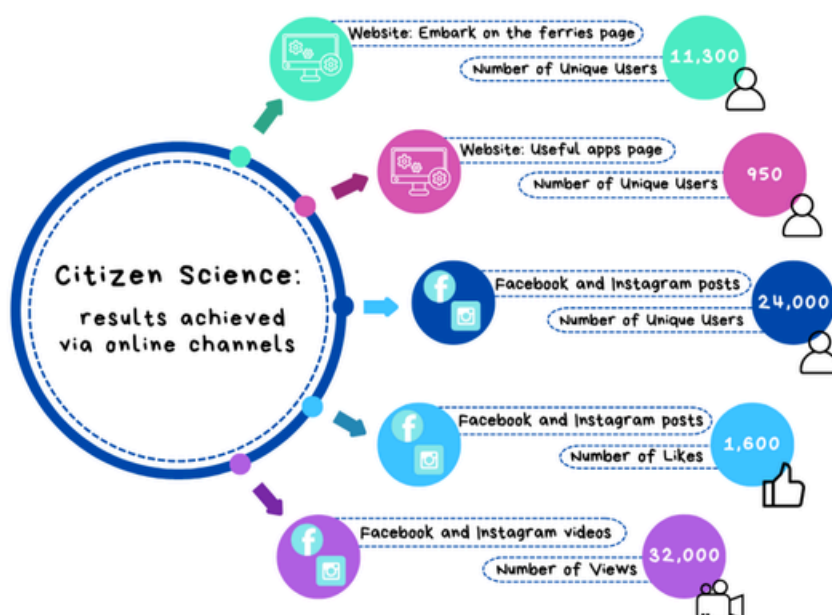
And the results speak for themselves:

- **399 applications received** – more than four times the original target.
- **240 volunteers trained online**, with **128 joining researchers onboard**, doubling the project's goal of 60 fully trained citizen scientists.

Over **70% of volunteers were women**, and the majority were **young adults (18–29)**. Although many were students, 40% were professionals from a variety of backgrounds, showing the campaign's ability to reach beyond the academic world.

The project's Citizen Science webpage attracted **over 11,000 unique visitors**, while related content on social media reached **24,000 people**, with **32,000 views** on project videos.





Feedback from volunteers was overwhelmingly positive. **89% rated the onboard training as excellent**, and **92% felt more aware of marine environmental issues** after participating. Many described the experience as unforgettable and would recommend the experience to others.

From identifying species to collecting data at sea, these volunteers weren't just spectators and became real contributors to marine science: they took part in real research, learning how to spot and identify marine species, record data, and contribute to a growing scientific effort to understand and protect the Mediterranean's biodiversity.

In the end, this campaign wasn't just about data collection—it was about ensuring volunteers to feel part of a larger scientific mission, and building a community of ocean-conscious citizens. It showed that when given the opportunity, people are eager to learn, contribute, and make a difference. The LIFE CONCEPTU MARIS Citizen Science campaign didn't just reach its goals—it **exceeded them**, proving the power of collaboration between science and society.

REPORT OF THE RESULTS OF CONSORTIUM MEETINGS EXPECTED BY CONCEPTU MARIS PROJECT (1th kick-off and 2nd mid-term and online meetings)

Leaded by ISPRA, with the collaboration of all partners

DELIVERABLE E2.1

The Advisory Board (AB) of the LIFE CONCEPTU MARIS project plays a central role in aligning conservation efforts for cetaceans and sea turtles across Italy, France, and Spain. Composed of scientific institutions, ferry companies, national authorities, local MPAs, NGOs, and Blue Economy representatives, the AB acts as a bridge between research, policy, and maritime stakeholders.

Key Meetings & Activities

- **Kick-off & Mid-Term Meetings:** From 2022 to 2024, in-person and online meetings gathered stakeholders to review protocols, share updates, and plan conservation measures.
- **Workshops & Conferences:** Collaborative workshops were held during the European Cetacean Society Conferences (2023 in Spain, 2024 in Italy) to foster cross-border cooperation and standardize cetacean monitoring using ferries.
- **Networking Events:** Public and stakeholder events (e.g., in Rome and Genoa) strengthened cooperation, promoted citizen science, and highlighted tools like Marine Ranger and SEAWatcher apps.
- **Ferry-based Field Experience:**
Aboard events, such as the Civitavecchia-Barcelona ferry mid-term meeting, offered hands-on demonstrations of data collection, including eDNA, visual monitoring, and marine litter tracking.
- **Ongoing Dialogue:** Continuous exchanges with national ministries (Italy's MASE and Spain's MITECO) supported data sharing for Habitat Directive reporting (Article 17).



Main Results

- A **robust collaborative network** now links scientific partners, policy makers, and ferry operators.
- The **Common Database** was developed and harmonised, integrating more than 15 years of data on CEPTU species.
- **Standardised protocols** were adopted for visual surveys and data management.
- **Key indicators for species conservation status** have been identified and are being finalised.
- **Ferry companies** are very engaged and actively participate in training and mitigation planning.
- The campaign elevated the role of **Blue Economy stakeholders**, emphasising the shared responsibility in reducing marine litter and supporting sustainable use of sea resources.
- Data have been formally **contributed to national reporting obligations**, including rare species records for Italy and comprehensive data for Spain.

Looking Ahead

The AB is now focused on delivering final strategic outputs:

- Identification of conservation indicators (Deliverable C1.2)
- Mapping critical areas and risk zones (Deliverable C1)
- Development of a Decision Support System (Deliverable C2.2)

These results will culminate in the **final project event in November 2025**, where proposals for CEPTU conservation actions and Natura 2000 site updates in Italy, France, and Spain will be presented.



DISSEMINATION EVENT ORGANISED BY ECOOCÉAN INSTITUT

November 21, 2024 - Montpellier

Léa David and **Marine Roul** presented CM first results obtained through the work done in the Pelagos Sanctuary area: data collection, e-learning training and questionnaire, the citizen involvement possibilities, and the next steps of the CM project. A total of **129 participants** took part in the event.



COMMOCEAN 2024 CONFERENCE

International Marine Communication Conference

November 26-27, 2024 - Málaga, Spain

The conference aimed to bridge the gap between science and society, promoting innovative tools and strategies—like digital storytelling and multimedia—to make marine science accessible, engaging, and meaningful for broader audiences. It gathered 160 participants from research institutions, NGOs, universities, the media, and marine-focused organisations across Europe and beyond.

Over two days, attendees took part in oral presentations, pitch sessions, roundtables, and workshops, sharing best practices in communicating ocean science. Elena Santini, from ISPRA had the opportunity to present CM Citizen Science campaign outside a strictly scientific context, expanding the project's outreach potential and exploring new approaches to engage the public.

BOOK OF ABSTRACT



NETWORKING EVENT WITH THE FRENCH PROJECT FLT MEDOCCI

December 10, 2024

The results of the combined effort from FLT MedOcci and Conceptu Maris projects, by EOI were presented online, included to representative from OFB, CEREMA, MPA from Corsica and Gulf of Lion.

ECORITMI: WHEN MUSIC MEETS THE SEA

On **February 28, 2025**, CM joined the **ECOritmi** initiative at **Rome's Teatro Palladium**, as part of Mutamenti – a series exploring new forms of expression through art and music. The project's scientific coordinator, **Antonella Arcangeli (ISPRA)**, took the stage for a short talk titled “**Vital Sound: The Mammals of the Sea**”, on the rich acoustic world of cetaceans which also highlighted the growing threat of **underwater noise pollution**, and how CM is working with ferry companies to reduce the impact of maritime traffic on marine life.

The talk was accompanied by a compelling video produced by **Triton Research**. This unique event brought together **science, sound, and sustainability**, sparking reflections on how music and nature can harmonise in a shared effort to protect the Mediterranean's most iconic species.



NETWORKING EVENT: WORKSHOP ORGANISED WITHIN THE SHIPRINT PROJECT

March 14, 2025 - Marseille (and online)

EOI and CIMA, also representing Conceptu Maris, took part in the ShiPrint projectworkshop, an initiative led by ACCOBAMS in collaboration with OceanCare, SINAY, and WeAreMediterranée. The project supports the implementation of voluntary Associated Protected measures within the north-western Particularly Sensitive Area (PSSA).

This workshop focused on engaging the professional maritime sector, particularly cargo and tanker companies, by promoting knowledge exchange, sharing technical solutions, and raising awareness on key environmental issues.

Project leaders also initiated coordination with EOI for the upcoming Conceptu Maris workshop with ferry operators, scheduled for 2025, reinforcing collaboration between initiatives operating in the region.

DISSEMINATION EVENT, ORGANIZED BY SZN

March 19, 2025 - Lega Navale of Naples

The event began with a brief lesson on marine turtle biology, followed by an introduction to monitoring techniques. Aboard four sailing boats, participants had the chance to apply the acquired knowledge in a real-life context, simulating real surveys using professional equipment.

The initiative effectively combined theory and practice, actively engaging attendees—especially teenagers—and enhancing their understanding of marine conservation. The interactive approach proved highly educational, highlighting the value of citizen science in protecting marine biodiversity and fostering greater public awareness and participation.



CONCEPTU MARIS JOINS “LA NAVE DEI LIBRI” ABOARD THE ROMA FERRY



From April 5 to 7, 2025, the CM project took part in “**La Nave dei Libri**”, an event organised by Leggere: tutti – Agra Editrice aboard the **Grimaldi Lines ferry** along the Civitavecchia–Barcelona route.

During the crossing, project scientists combined their **marine monitoring activities** with **educational outreach**, engaging over **300 students and passengers**, including five Erasmus+ school delegations from Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Spain, and Turkey.

Participants had the chance to observe cetacean and sea turtle monitoring methods firsthand, guided by **Roberto Crosti (ISPRA)**, **Francesco Tomasinelli (Triton Research)**, and citizen science volunteers **Donato De Girolamo** and **Matteo Marazzi**.

The experience culminated in the **preview screening of the documentary “Without Borders – Protecting Cetaceans and Sea Turtles”**, produced by Triton Research for CM—highlighting conservation efforts and cross-border collaboration throughout the Mediterranean.



CONCEPTU MARIS ON THE ROAD



Citizen Science Italy Conference, April 9 - 12, 2025 in Bologna

Lara Carosso from AMP Capo Carbonara shared the results of the project's citizen science campaign, with a particular focus on training, recruitment, and future perspectives.

The presentation was part of the session highlighting initiatives that have generated long-lasting impacts and scalable results, contributing knowledge that is useful in addressing global challenges.

FULL PROGRAMME



AND FUTURE EVENT PARTICIPATION!



- **14-16/05/2025** European Cetacean Society Conference (Horta, Azores, Portugal)
- **9/06/2025** Marine Biodiversity Session – European Digital Ocean Pavilion at UNOC3 (Nice, France)
- **16-19/06/2025** 1st International Whales ships collisions Workshop (Brest, France)
- **18/06/2025** Meeting with MITECO (Ministerio para la Transición Ecológica y el Reto Demográfico), (Valencia, Spain)
- **10/2025** Meeting with the Advisory Board (Science and Politics) in Pelagos Corsica Ferry
- **23/10/2025 - 2/11/2025** Festival della Scienza (Genova, Italy)
- **11/2025** Final Public Event (Rome, Italy)

CONCEPTU MARIS ON THE PRESS

Corriere della Sera, December 23, 2024

Whales, dolphins and turtles: how are they distributed in the Mediterranean and what are their ecological preferences?

READ THE ARTICLE 

La Repubblica, January 5, 2025

The map of cetaceans in the Mediterranean is drawn by researchers on a “cruise”

READ THE ARTICLE 

TGR RAI3, January 11, 2025

Interview with Antonella Arcangeli (ISPRA) during the session “Gli amici animali” (Animal Friends).


WATCH THE VIDEO 

TG5 Canale 5, February 12, 2025

Fulvio Maffucci from the Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn and Antonella Arcangeli from ISPRA introduced the data collection on cetaceans and sea turtles and presented the technologies involved and the trends observed in some of the key species studied by the project.

WATCH THE VIDEO 

SCIENTIFIC PAPER

Cetacean Conservation in the Pelagos Sanctuary: Status and Proposal for Its Improvement. Stoppa, E.; Grossi, F.; David, L.; Di-Meglio, N.; Roul, M.; Arcangeli, A.; Pasanisi, E.; Campana, I.; Paraboschi, M.; Castelli, A.; et al. Cetacean Conservation in the Pelagos Sanctuary: Status and Proposal for Its Improvement. Diversity 2025, 17, 174. <https://doi.org/10.3390/d17030174> <https://www.mdpi.com/1424-2818/17/3/174/pdf> 

12 May, 2025

www.lifeconceptu.eu



LIFE CONCEPTU MARIS

CONservation of CEtaceans and Pelagic sea TUrtles in Med:
Managing Actions for their Recovery In Sustainability



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FINAL PROJECT EVENT INFORMATION PREVIEW:

**SAVE
THE DATE**

The final event of the project will take place in Rome at the end of November 2025. During the event, the project's results will be shared with stakeholders and the general public. There will be opportunities for brainstorming on the main technical outcomes, communication activities, interactive games, interviews, and various other initiatives aimed at engaging the audience and passing on the project's legacy.

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Coordinating Beneficiary:



Associated Beneficiaries:

