

Outreach and communication in marine geosciences: The integrated strategy of METU Institute of Marine Sciences to engage communities in Turkey and Europe

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Seas, coasts and the geochemical processes therein provide invaluable ecosystem services. However, impacts from climate change and anthropogenic effects threaten the sustainability of these services, requiring innovative, multi-actor and multidisciplinary solutions. In order to participate in solutions to these complex challenges, as much as advancing marine science itself, communicating a basic understanding of ocean systems and engaging communities and citizens is essential. METU Institute of Marine Sciences (METU-IMS) is the leading marine science research institute of Turkey that conducts research, provides graduate-level education and advises public and private sectors for more than 40 years. The institute recently launched a comprehensive strategy that includes developing an integrated, community-oriented communication approach. With such a ‘‘360 degree’ communication strategy to raise ocean awareness, the institute aims to reach public audience with target group-tailored messages in the right platform at the right time with the adequate frequency. The communication tools of METU-IMS include Twitter, Facebook, Instagram accounts and a dynamic web page, which is closely linked to the social media channels. Researchers in the field communicate their daily activities via blogs hosted by METU web pages. The strategy goes beyond this and involves traditional but revised, one-to-one communication with communities. Since 2012, we have provided training to over 7000 K-12 students from 200 different schools at the regional level. Moreover, we have participated in 5 National Science Fairs and 4 EU Horizon 2020 Researchers Nights and reached approximately 40000 people of all ages. To further elevate the impact of marine sciences, we have participated social seminars as ‘Science Café’ and TedX Talks. Last but not least we use written, visual and digital platforms, particularly METU’s KAMPUS and ODTULU magazines to increase regional, national and international awareness in support of our three-part mission of education, research and sharing its outcomes with communities and citizens.