

MARBEFES Coastal Watch Activities Engage Communities Along the Polish Coast

During May and June 2026, the MARBEFES project organised and supported a series of Coastal Watch activities in the Gdańsk Bay region, bringing together scientists, environmental managers, artists, NGOs, students and local communities to promote marine biodiversity conservation and strengthen stakeholder engagement.

BioBlitz - Inspired Event Strengthens Cooperation with Coastal Landscape Parks

On **21 May 2026**, an event inspired by the MARBEFES BioBlitz concept was organised by the management of three Polish Coastal Landscape Parks: **Słowiński, Nadmorski and Vistula Spit (Mierzeja Wiślana) Landscape Parks**.

The event introduced participants to the MARBEFES approach to biodiversity monitoring and demonstrated how project outcomes can support the management of coastal and marine protected areas. Representatives of NGOs, local schools and the general public actively participated in the activities, while the event received coverage in local media. Importantly, the meeting also established a strong foundation for future cooperation between the MARBEFES consortium and the Polish National and Landscape Parks, creating new opportunities for knowledge exchange and joint biodiversity initiatives.



MARBEFES Project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement no 101060937 and UKRI under Grant Agreements 10040216, 10048815 and 10041354



Exploring Coastal Biodiversity Through Science and Art

Following the successful MARBEFES mini-conference *Humans and the European Marine Environment – Adaptation to Climate and Biodiversity Change*, held in November 2025, a group of environmental activists, artists and local stakeholders continued their involvement in project activities through consultations and participatory biodiversity workshops.

One such event took place on **12 June 2026**, focusing on the ecological importance of sandy beaches as complex and highly diverse ecosystems. Participants learned about one of the Baltic coast's charismatic species, the **sandhopper (*Talitrus saltator*)**, a semi-aquatic crustacean whose Polish populations have been gradually declining since the 1960s, largely due to increasing coastal development, intensive tourism and vehicle traffic on beaches.

The programme combined scientific observation with creative engagement. Participants took part in **non-destructive field sampling**, during which sandhoppers were counted and immediately released, allowing researchers to demonstrate biodiversity monitoring methods while minimizing disturbance to wildlife.

The field activities were complemented by a **guided mindfulness exercise**, developed by artists from the Academy of Fine Arts in Wrocław and the Gdańsk Centre for Contemporary Art. Inspired by the concept of *forest bathing*, the activity encouraged participants to experience the coastal environment through attentive observation and sensory awareness, fostering a deeper appreciation of marine nature.



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At the end of the event, participants completed an illustrated questionnaire designed to explore public perceptions of coastal biodiversity and identify the natural features that people value most along the seashore. The survey will contribute to a better understanding of how citizens perceive and appreciate coastal ecosystems.

What is important for you on the coast?

Please describe yourself:

Age category:
 19 to 60
 Over 60
 Less or equal 18

Gender:
 Female
 Male
 Prefer not to say

Profession:
 Arts, culture
 Business, administration
 Education, science
 Other

Your ge:
 Arctic
 Allian
 Baltic
 Medi
 North

Start new survey

What Matters to You at the Seashore?

This study is conducted by the Institute of Oceanology of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IO PAN), which is the coordinator of the European Horizon Europe project MARBEFES (MARine Biodiversity and Ecosystem Functioning leading to Ecosystem Services), running from 2022 to 2027. The project aims to advance our understanding of marine biodiversity and its importance for ecosystem functioning and the benefits that people derive from marine ecosystems.

This study aims to explore which elements of coastal environments people consider most important – landscape, biodiversity, or human infrastructure and activities.

You will be shown 153 pairs of images. For each pair, select the image that represents what is more important to you.

Participation is voluntary. The survey does not collect personal data. Responses are securely stored on the servers of the Institute of Oceanology of the Polish Academy of Sciences and used exclusively for scientific purposes within the MARBEFES project.

For questions about the study, please contact: weslaw@ioopan.pl

I agree to participate in this study.

Start Survey

Sharing MARBEFES Knowledge with Environmental Practitioners

On **23–24 June 2026**, employees of the Polish environmental administration participated in a two-day Summer School dedicated to the preparation and management of European environmental projects.

The second day was hosted by the **Institute of Oceanology of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IO PAN)** and focused on the MARBEFES project. Participants were introduced to the project's objectives, tools and practical outcomes, with particular emphasis on their application in biodiversity conservation and ecosystem management.

The programme included a guided coastal walk between **Gdynia and Sopot**, during which researchers discussed local environmental challenges and demonstrated how MARBEFES methods can support evidence-based coastal management. The visit concluded with presentations at the IO PAN headquarters and an interactive discussion, where participants explored opportunities for applying MARBEFES tools in their own professional practice.



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Building Connections Between Science, Society and Nature

These Coastal Watch activities demonstrate how MARBEFES combines scientific research, stakeholder engagement and public participation to strengthen biodiversity conservation and promote sustainable management of Europe's coastal ecosystems. By bringing together researchers, environmental authorities, artists, educators and local communities, the project continues to foster dialogue, raise environmental awareness and encourage collaborative action for healthier and more resilient marine environments.



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