

## ***Full Package Participation GRANTS for WCMB***

*The 7th World Conference on Marine Biodiversity*

**FUNDED BY THE SEA AS A GOOD CAUSE – VLIZ PHILANTHROPY  
& The National Decade Committee for Belgium**

*Call open to Early Career Ocean Professionals*



**7TH WORLD  
CONFERENCE ON  
MARINE  
BIO** 17-20 NOVEMBER 2026  
BRUGES (BELGIUM)  
**DIVERSITY**

## The Sea as a Good Cause

VLIZ - [Flanders Marine Institute](#) - has become, over the past 25 years, a knowledge institution indispensable to the marine research landscape. What started as an institute focusing on science support, has evolved into a national and international point of contact for marine research. VLIZ initiates and carries out multidisciplinary research and supports marine experts by providing research infrastructure, data, information and knowledge. VLIZ supports the blue economy and reaches out to a broad public. VLIZ further broadens its marine horizons and aims at becoming a world player in the field of marine and coastal research.

VLIZ is, alongside its core activities, recognized as a charitable organization and therefore developed a financial separate philanthropy program named [The Sea as a Good Cause](#). Through this program, VLIZ is able to raise additional funds through membership fees, donations, sponsorships, bequests, etc. to provide financial support to promote marine research worldwide.

VLIZ acts as the [secretariat of the National Decade Committee \(NDC\) for Belgium](#). Together with the core-members of this committee supports national members to take decade actions. It mobilises resources and contributions, engages with national ocean stakeholders and other NDC at an international level. Besides it communicates, reaches out and raises awareness on vision and mission of the Ocean Decade.

## Full Package Participation Grant

Within the framework of [international collaborations](#) between VLIZ and scientific institutes in the 'Global South', but also beyond, VLIZ The Sea as a Good Cause awards participation grants. With these grants, promising students and young or early career researchers in marine sciences can, during a short stay, exchange knowledge and gain practical experience in the labs of several marine research groups or attend, in Flanders, an international conference or a summer school in line with their expertise. The participation grants 'Global South' aim to enhance the so-called 'north-south' and 'south-south' cooperation, to support international mobility and exchanges.

*In the framework of 'The 7th World Conference on Marine Biodiversity', The Sea as a Good Cause and The secretariat of the National Decade Committee for Belgium awards **10 full package participation grants** to promising early career marine scientists. We want to offer the young marine researchers the hands-on and in-depth experience of the conference.*

The Early Career Ocean Professional (ECOP) should be enrolled in or hold a bachelor, MSc, PhD program or junior postdoctoral trajectory in marine science and be younger than 35. With these participation grants, we wish to inspire and enable ECOPs to exchange experience (peer-to-peer and with experienced ocean professionals) and gain expertise by participating in [The 7th World Conference on Marine Biodiversity](#) organized by the Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ), from 17 – 20 November 2026 in Bruges, Belgium.

## The 7th World Conference on Marine Biodiversity

[The 2026 World Conference on Marine Biodiversity](#) will be a major assembly opportunity to share research outcomes, management and policy topics, offer a platform to discuss current as well as emerging marine biodiversity issues, and identify ways to protect and sustainably manage marine ecosystems and their resources. The conference will bring together scientists, practitioners and policy makers, aiming to discuss and advance our understanding of the importance, past, current and future state of marine biodiversity.

The overall theme of the Conference is *'The marine biodiversity insights we need, for the ocean we want'*.

The seventh edition of the World Conference flies the UN Ocean Decade flag, as it has been endorsed as a UN Ocean Decade Event. As the Conference will take place a little over halfway through the UN Ocean Decade, it will provide an excellent opportunity to take stock of ongoing actions and initiatives but also evaluate what still needs to be tackled by the end of the Decade.

<b>Launch of the call</b>	10 February 2026
<b>Submission deadline</b>	17 March 2026
<b>Selection</b>	The selection will be made before July 2026, by the National Decade Committee for Belgium (core-members), the VLIZ Scientific Committee and the WCMB Scientific Committee 2026.
<b>Required documents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- application form (download the form <a href="#">here</a>) including motivation letter and abstract submission</li> <li>- cv of the ECOP</li> <li>- letter of consent of the supervisor at the workplace or affiliated to the student's university or university college (free format)</li> <li>- a copy of your bachelor/master's degree <u>or</u> prove of your doctoral grant</li> </ul>

## Budget

All grants are funded by The Sea as a Good Cause and The secretariat of the National Decade Committee for Belgium.

## Our Offer: Full Package Participation Grant

The overall budget available for one grant for a full conference participation is maximum 2.500 EUR and is funded by The Sea as a Good Cause and The secretariat of the National Decade Committee for Belgium. **The grant of maximum 2.500 EUR** is used to allow the Early Career Ocean Professional to participate the full term of the 2026 WCMB. The grant includes the travel cost for the **flight** (lowest fare, economy class), **accommodation** in a hotel in Bruges from Monday 16 November till Friday 20 November and the **registration fee** for WCMB. The participation grant does not include: food cost for other meals than the ones provided during the conference, neither does it include costs to obtain a visa. Booking of flight, registration fee, and accommodation are taken care of by The Sea as a Good Cause.

Number of grants to be awarded: 10, according to a distribution key: **4 grants** to be awarded to **ECOPs from the Global South** of whom the supervisor is known within the network of the WCMB 2026 scientific committee, **4 grants** to be awarded to **ECOPs** active at institutes related to VLIZ by its **international collaborations**, and **2 grants** to be awarded to **WoRMS editors** from the Global South.

## Eligibility and selection criteria for the Full Package Participation Grant

- The applicant is active as an ocean professional (for example: working on the blue economy, engineering at sea, law of the sea, etc), or is a bachelor, master, PhD student or junior postdoc, who is at the time of application younger than 35 and with less than 3 years' experience at postdoc level (i.e. after obtaining the doctoral degree).
- The applicant works or performs his/her studies in the wider field linked to marine biodiversity.
- The applicant is affiliated to a marine research institute, a university or a university college in the Global South in a developing country or a least developed country (see annex 1) and/or is active in a VLIZ affiliated Marine Research Institute (see annex 2) and/or is one of the [WoRMS editors](#) with residence in a country of annex 1.
- Consent of the (university) (college) (work) supervisor.
- The supervisor/promotor who provides the letter of consent is a scientist known within the network of the WCMB scientific committee 2026.
- A copy of the bachelor/master degree or the doctoral grant is required.
- Entering and acceptance of an abstract is obligatory to be awarded a participation grant.
- Selection will be made based on the motivation letter, presence of the letter of consent and active participation because of an accepted abstract which allows you to give an oral or a poster presentation.

## Terms & Conditions

- The grant will be awarded to the successful applicant personally.
- The laureate hands in a one-page report about his/her participation at the WCMB, including 3 photos with the laureate pictured during the conference activities. The report mentions the added value of the conference for its own research.
- Reports and communication via social media should include a reference to the National Decade Committee for Belgium, VLIZ The Sea as a Good Cause and WCMB 2026.
- The report is sent to [filantropie@vliz.be](mailto:filantropie@vliz.be) by 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2026 the latest.
- This input will be used for communication about the participation grants awarded.

## How to submit?

Candidates can apply for the grant by sending the **following documents** to [filantropie@vliz.be](mailto:filantropie@vliz.be):

- application form including motivation letter and abstract
- cv of the ECOP
- letter of consent of the supervisor from the workplace or affiliated to the student's university or university college (free format)
- a copy of your bachelor or master's degree or prove of your doctoral grant.

**Subject of the e-mail:** 'Motivation letter – full package participation grant – WCMB'

**Submission deadline:** No later than **March 17 2026**

## Where to turn for more information?

### Institute

Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ)  
InnovOcean Campus  
Jacobsenstraat 1  
8400 Oostende  
Belgium

### Contact person

Karen Rappé  
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**\* Annex 1: Countries eligible for a WCMB participation grant for early career marine scientists active in the Global South**

Africa	Middle & South America	Asia & Oceania
Algeria	Antigua and Barbuda	Bangladesh
Angola	Argentina	Cambodia
Benin	Belize	China
Cameroon	Brazil	Cook Islands
Comoros	Colombia	Democratic Republic of Korea
Congo	Costa Rica	Fiji
Democratic Republic of Congo	Cuba	Philippines
Djibouti	Dominica	India
Egypt	Dominican Republic	Indonesia
Equatorial Guinea	Ecuador	Kiribati
Eritrea	El Salvador	Laos
Gabon	Grenada	Maldives
Gambia	Guatemala	Malaysia
Ghana	Guyana	Marshall Islands
Guinea	Haiti	Micronesia
Guinea Bissau	Honduros	Myanmar
Ivory Coast	Jamaica	Nauru
Kenya	Cabo Verde	Niue
Liberia	Mexico	Palau
Libya	Montserrat	Papua New Guinea
Madagascar	Nicaragua	Samoa
Morocco	Panama	Solomon Islands
Mauritania	Peru	Sri Lanka
Mauritius	Saint Helena	Thailand
Mozambique	Saint Lucia	Timor-Leste
Namibia	Saint Vincent & the Grenadines	Tokelau
Nigeria	Suriname	Tonga
Sao Tome & Principe	Venezuela	Tuvalu
Senegal		Turkey
Sierra Leone		Vanuatu
Sudan		Vietnam
Somalia		Wallis and Futuna
Tanzania		
Togo		
Tunisia		
South Africa		

## Annex 2: International collaborations

Within the framework of international collaborations between VLIZ and scientific institutes in the Global South, VLIZ The Sea as a Good Cause and The secretariat of the National Decade Committee for Belgium award **a full package travel grant** to a promising student in marine sciences affiliated to the following Marine Research Institutes:

- [Instituto de Fomento Pesquero](#) (IFOP) – HQ Valparaiso, Chile
- [Fundacion Huinay](#) - Region Los Lagos, Chile
- [Instituto de Investigaciones Marinas y Costeras \(INVEMAR\) Colombia](#) – Santa Marta, Colombia
- [Centro de Investigaciones de Biología Marina](#) (CIBIMA-FC-UASD) - Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

- [Dirección General Intereses Marítimos \(DIGEIM\)](#) & [Escuela Superior Politecnica del Litoral \(ESPOL\)](#) – Ecuador
- [Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute \(KMFRI\)](#) – Mombasa, Kenya
- [Instituto del Mar del Peru \(IMARPE\)](#) - Lima, Peru