

# **MED-JELLYRISK**

## Conference and Training Seminar

Addressing jellyfish blooms to safeguard coastal economic activities  
*Research, innovation, management and education*

Corinthia St. George's Hotel, St. Julian's, Malta  
20th – 21st May 2014

## ASSESSING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF JELLYFISH BLOOMS ON TOURISTS AT VARIOUS BEACHES/COASTAL LOCATIONS AROUND THE MALTESE ISLANDS

Many initiatives and studies are currently being conducted in order to understand the pattern and trends of jellyfish aggregations. Med-Jelly Risk is the first initiative in the Mediterranean to assess the socio-economic impact of jellyfish blooms and implement mitigation measures. Malta, together with Italy, Spain and Tunis are also part of this initiative. This study, in collaboration with Med-JellyRisk and IOI-MOC Spot the Jellyfish initiative, was a preliminary attempt at assessing and investigating the socio-economic impact of jellyfish phenomenon on tourists around the Maltese Islands and to test the effectiveness of the Med-JellyRisk questionnaires.

Three hundred questionnaires, provided by the Med-Jelly Risk team, were conducted at 12 different beaches/coastal locations around Malta, Gozo and Comino, during the months of July and August 2013. These sites were identified according to where jellyfish sightings were reported and the beaches popularity with tourists. To seek whether there was a significant difference between the willingness-to-pay values of different tourist age groups, coun-

tries and educational background vis-a-vis an entrance fee to beaches in Malta where anti-jellyfish nets would be installed, three hypotheses were also tested. It is a known fact that the interdependence between the environment and the economy is of an increasing importance. Many countries such as Malta, depend greatly on tourism mainly for its economy, and therefore rely significantly on its marine environment and beaches.

In 2013, Malta reached a record of 1.6 million tourists visiting the islands, an increase of 9.3% over the 2012 figures. In 2013, total tourist expenditure was estimated to be 1.4 billion euros. Statistical analysis from results obtained from questionnaires, showed that more than 50% of tourists would still come to Malta and go to beaches if jellyfish outbreak had to occur, but would avoid getting into the water. Results also showed that many tourists spend quite a lot on beach rentals, food and drinks, if jellyfish blooms occurred, various enterprises at beaches and coastal locations will suffer from an economic loss, but sea activities will undergo

**Author** Tanti, Gwyneth; Deidun, Alan

**Affiliation** IOI-MOC, University of Malta, Msida, Malta

**Contact** gwyntanti@gmail.com