

To whom it may concern,

We appreciate the interest in the OCEAN CITIZEN Horizon Europe project shown by citizens and organizations regarding the future of Tenerife's natural and cultural heritage.

However, we would like to clarify some important points regarding the OCEAN CITIZEN project that are currently misrepresented in the letter previously shared in El Diario.es newspaper by Salvar Punta Blanca and in the presented email (8/9/2025):

OCEAN CITIZEN is a Research and Development project funded under the Horizon Europe program of the European Union. Its objective is to **develop science-based marine restoration protocols** across five European ecozones, including Tenerife (the other sites are located in the Arctic, Baltic, Mediterranean, Atlantic, and the Red Sea). By working across different ecozones, we will better understand the scientific procedures and citizenship practices that are necessary to increase biodiversity, capture carbon, enhance connectivity, and increase the biomass of species that provide societal benefits (e.g., species that support fisheries and tourism activities). These protocols aim to contribute to global knowledge on habitat restoration, following the highest scientific rigor, transparency, and open-access publication standards.

OCEAN CITIZEN will not develop any land-based infrastructures. The funding for the project does not financially support the construction or management of the proposed Underwater Gardens Park. Any initiatives outside the scope of the funded project are the independent responsibility of the involved entities and do not represent the objectives, outputs, or endorsements of the OCEAN CITIZEN consortium. UGI is involved in the OCEAN CITIZEN project as one of 22 partners, working on different tasks of the various work packages. Still, the OCEAN CITIZEN project is independent from the terrestrial initiatives that were reported upon in the previous letter.

All OCEAN CITIZEN activities are guided by environmental and ethical standards, including alignment with the Habitats Directive and Natura 2000 network, one of the EU requirements. All actions are conducted in accordance with the permits required by the competent administration. Our work is publicly available and will be open to scrutiny and use by the broader scientific and conservation communities. The protocols we are developing will be made publicly available through open access and peer-reviewed publications once the project is completed, following the rules of the OCEAN CITIZEN Grant Agreement of the project.

We understand and respect that concerns may arise regarding development projects in sensitive areas. Open dialogue and transparent processes are crucial. However, it is essential not to blend and conflate the independent scientific research of OCEAN CITIZEN with initiatives that are not under its control.

This letter was sent to El Diario.es on June 4th, but for some reason, it was not published.

We remain fully committed to advancing science to benefit the ocean and coastal communities and maintain an open, constructive dialogue with all stakeholders.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sergio Rossi

OCEAN CITIZEN Coordinator

On behalf of the OCEAN CITIZEN Coordination Team