



BioMARathon Informative Session

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. How can a citizen participate in the BioMARathon?

- **Without Organised Events:**
 - Participants can explore the coastal areas at their own pace, recording biodiversity observations during coastal walks, snorkelling, or diving. They can upload their observations directly to the **MINKA platform**.
 - This option allows (provides / gives) **flexibility** and encourages people to participate whenever they have the opportunity to explore marine and coastal environments.
- **Through Organised Activities:**
 - **Joining organised events** – Local organisers or community groups may host guided activities such as coastal walks, snorkelling tours, or diving sessions. These events are designed to **facilitate learning** and **enhance the experience** through the guidance of experts or experienced volunteers.
 - Organised activities are a great way to engage with the community, allowing participants to learn and enjoy a social experience while contributing to citizen science.

Both options allow participants to **contribute at their own pace**, from a **single observation to multiple entries**, depending on their interests and availability.



Do participants need an underwater camera to take part in the BioMARathon?

No, participants do not necessarily need an underwater camera to contribute to the BioMARathon. As an organiser, you can facilitate participation by considering the following options:

- **Terrestrial Observations:** Participants can **record biodiversity observations from the terrestrial part of the beach (such as dune vegetation), washed out organisms on the shoreline or low-tide rock pool organisms** using their own **smartphones or cameras**. This allows for flexibility and encourages participation without requiring specialised equipment.
- **Providing Underwater Cameras:**
 - For example, in **BioMARató Catalonia**, some **mobilising communities provide underwater cameras** free of charge to participants. If you collaborate with local diving clubs or environmental organisations, consider this approach to **enhance participant experience**.
 - **Group Sharing of Equipment:** If there are not enough underwater cameras for all participants, a practical solution is dividing participants in groups **of 2-3 people** who can **take turns using the camera**. This promotes collaboration and ensures that all participants have an opportunity to contribute.
 - **Using Waterproof Cases for Smartphones:** Some entities prefer **waterproof cases for smartphones** as an alternative to providing underwater cameras. This is a cost-effective solution that allows participants to use their own devices while ensuring these are protected underwater.



Is the BioMARathon only focused on invasive species?

No, although information about invasive species is valuable, participants can upload observations of any species they encounter, including native species and dune vegetation.

Can the BioMARathon be replicated in freshwater environments like lakes and rivers?

While the BioMARathon is promoted as a long-term event in marine ecosystems, the MINKA platform can be used for any domain and organism type. This flexibility allows its application in freshwater ecosystems as well.

How does the BioMARathon compare to a BioBlitz?

The BioMARathon shares similarities with a BioBlitz but is designed as a long-term event focusing on marine and coastal biodiversity. A dedicated paper detailing the differences is being prepared and will be shared once published.

Can the BioMARathon be organised on a small scale?

While the BioMARathon is designed as a large-scale citizen science event, you can **start on a smaller scale** by organising a **pilot event**, such as a **marine BioBlitz** in collaboration with the BioMARathon. This approach allows you to **test and learn in your region / with your local community** before committing to a full-scale event.



You can **create a small-scale BioMARathon project** by:

- **Defining your area of study** – Use tools like **Google Earth** to create a **KML polygon** of your chosen location, whether it's a small beach, a marine protected area, or a specific coastal habitat.
- **Customising the project on the MINKA platform** – The platform is flexible and user-friendly, allowing you to adapt the project to your region's needs.
- **Receiving support and guidance** – The BioMARathon team is available to help you **get started**, providing resources and assistance throughout the process.
- Check [here our MINKA guide for creating a project](#).

Starting with a pilot event or a small-scale project allows you to **build experience**, **engage your community**, and **assess local interest**, laying the groundwork for future expansion.

Are there resources for educational institutions, such as schools?

Yes, while BioMARathon itself does not have specific educational materials, MINKA is used in other projects with a strong educational focus, such as [ProBleu](#), which promotes ocean literacy and citizen science with schools. We can provide guidance on how to adapt these resources for use in a BioMARathon.

Is there funding available to organise a BioMARathon?

Currently, **no direct funding is available** from the BioMARathon team for organising events. However, we **strongly recommend seeking support from local stakeholders**, including the **mobilising community** in your region, such as diving



clubs, environmental NGOs, or local businesses, who can assist in organising activities or providing in-kind support.

Additionally, we can **explore opportunities in EU funding calls** to secure funding for future BioMARathon events.

How can I get prizes for the winners of the BioMARathon?

Prizes are **not mandatory** for organising a BioMARathon, but they are **highly appreciated by participants** and have proven **effective in enhancing engagement and motivation**. Offering prizes can create a sense of achievement and friendly competition, encouraging participants to **contribute with more observations** and **stay involved throughout the event**.

If you decide to offer prizes, here are some suggestions:

- Prizes for the BioMARathon are typically **donations from collaborators or local sponsors**. Examples include:
 - **Guided tours, scuba diving experiences, or vouchers for snorkelling equipment** are provided by local diving schools or environmental organisations that are part of your BioMARathon mobilising community organising activities. For them, it is easy to provide an extra spot in one of the activities they are already organising outside the BioMARathon.
 - **Merchandise or gift vouchers** from local businesses that wish to promote their products or services.
- We recommend **seeking local sponsorships** by offering **promotional opportunities in exchange for prizes**, such as featuring their logos on event materials or acknowledging their support on social media.



- In **Catalonia**, for example, the BioMARathon collaborates with local companies like **Cressi** to provide prizes in exchange for **brand visibility** during the event.

How do you encourage participants to respond to surveys?

If you **organise guided activities** as part of your BioMARathon, it is a good practice to **collect feedback from participants**. You can send them a short survey asking about their **motivations for participating**, whether they **enjoyed the experience**, and if they **learned something new**. This feedback is **valuable for improving future events** and **understanding participant engagement**.

The best approach is to:

- **Conduct surveys on-site** during the event when participants are still engaged and the experience is fresh in their minds, rather than sending them out days later. You can use a printed QR code with a link to the survey.
- Offer **certificates of participation** as an incentive for completing the survey, which is particularly effective for families with children.
- Keep the survey **short and simple**, focusing on key questions about motivations, enjoyment, and learning outcomes.

Can underage participants join the BioMARathon?

Yes, underage participants can contribute observations if they are accompanied by a legal guardian who uploads the pictures using their own account. For legal reasons, you have to be at least 18 years old to have an account in MINKA.



Does the MINKA platform support the recording of marine litter?

Not currently, but MINKA is working to integrate marine litter observation features. As a pilot, users can now upload marine litter as a "Marine Litter" taxa, which is then classified according to EU directives.

Are there any legal or ethical considerations for using BioMARathon data for research?

Participants can use BioMARathon data for research, such as PhD projects or scientific papers. However, informing the organisers about the research goals is recommended to ensure data privacy and ethical guidelines are maintained.

Also, when using data from MINKA, **it is mandatory to follow the MINKA citation guidelines:** https://minka-sdg.org/pages/citation_guidelines