



2022 International Aquarium Congress Programme

Today's aquariums can and should be jointly recognised as responsible, committed institutions that are not just key players in safeguarding aquatic biodiversity but also centres of scientific culture. They are the mouthpiece of the concerns and solutions raised by their audiences.

IAC 2022 is an outstanding opportunity for aquariums to share their best practices and outline their common priorities.

Aquariums, which as a body reach several million visitors every year, can report on and raise understanding about the challenges facing the aquatic world. They can also actively involve and mobilise the public on issues affecting the ocean and our future.

Collaborative work between aquarium professionals and sharing experiences means each of them can improve their organisation and environmental efficiency while securing their economic development, thereby bolstering their actions with the public.

The theme selected for IAC 2022 will explore how aquariums engage at the scientific, societal and political level by involving their audience and all relevant stakeholders in their day-to-day activities, research actions and conservation programmes – a sine qua non for developing our organisations.

One overall theme

Aquariums: engaged and active on behalf of the Blue Planet

Aquariums have a special responsibility that is of crucial importance today. In a world that has been turned on its head by global warming and the erosion of biodiversity, aquariums are a window on the ocean and a forum for initiating and supporting the preservation and a better understanding of the ocean environment. At a time when approximately 66% of the marine environment has been altered markedly by humans and only 3% has escaped the impact of human pressure (according to the latest report from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services: IPBES), the engagement of aquariums is pivotal for the future of the ocean – and, it follows, the future of the planet.

Not many of the citizens of the Blue Planet have had the privilege of admiring the beauty and harmony of the underwater world with their own eyes. Today, only 0.3% of humans go scuba diving with a tank or armed just with a mask and fins. Thanks to aquariums, they can encounter living beings that come from an environment that is inaccessible to most people. Aquariums offer an irreplaceable experience that plays on a mix of emotions and exploration, and which raises awareness about the need to protect this vulnerable universe that is under threat from human activity.

In 2003, the European OCEANICS public inquiry highlighted the fact that aquariums were considered the most reliable source of information about the oceans, ahead of television and the written press. In a world where we are all called on to digest more and more information, and where the official line often takes precedence over scientific fact, aquariums must reinforce this position and play a full part in society's debate on animal welfare.

Aquariums are at the forefront of innovation and research in the fields of breeding and reproduction control, improving knowledge about the biology of species and the ecology of natural marine environments. They are actors in species preservation since they set up or work in partnership with in-situ (in the field) or ex-situ (in our aquariums) conservation programmes.

They are unique venues of scientific culture, producing and disseminating knowledge and mobilising their audiences, especially the young. Aquariums are also forums where citizens can express their concerns about the environment and can learn about the impact of the current upheavals on their day-to-day lives. They can support visitors' determination to take action by offering them initiatives that contribute to preserving the oceans.

Last of all, the network of aquariums is a powerful mobilising force for action at institutional level as well as nationally and internationally. The engagement of aquariums is reflected in the way they work to ensure that the ocean is factored into decision-making and that it is recognised as a key driver for human development.

First day of the congress – introducing the overall theme

Keynote speakers: for this opening day of the congress, leading figures from different countries who campaign on behalf of the Ocean and aquatic environments, and who support key actions on a global scale, will present their experiences as a way of contributing to the deliberations.

Three themes to launch each of the following three days:

Each of the following three days will begin with a talk by the keynote speakers on one of the three elements of the main theme.

Presentations representative of these three themes selected by the reading panel will be scheduled immediately after the talks by the keynote speakers.

A scientific and technological commitment on behalf of marine biodiversity

Keynote speakers:

- The first speaker will be a specialist in the history of the science and techniques of aquariology
- The second speaker will be a specialist in international ocean science programmes

Some details of the theme:

- Links with the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030): aquariums, as key players in the production of knowledge about the aquatic environment, can contribute collectively to a better sharing of knowledge and boosting citizen mobilisation in support of the oceans. Presentation on the momentum created by the COI and the range of tools produced: the OL4all platform, Youth Forum, Blue Schools, an exhibition, public consultations, and so forth
- Controlling animal breeding, health and welfare

- Understanding the vulnerability of species and the factors that influence their survival in the natural environment and in captivity
- Controlling species reproduction
- Creating a species conservatory (a world coral conservatory, for example) to preserve endangered species
- Exchanges and partnerships with research organisations, universities, etc.
- Mobilising the know-how of the teams regarding the CSR approach of establishments
- Implementing and/or contributing to field initiatives through research carried out in aquariums and promoting these actions among visitors

A societal commitment through education, scientific production and raising awareness

Keynote speaker:

The speaker will be a specialist in studying the relationships between the different parts of society and aquariums, zoos and animal parks

Some details of the theme:

- Innovative presentation on living things to raise awareness about the complexity and vulnerability of marine ecosystems
- Creation of innovative museographies and scenographic designs that round off the presentation on living things and that can be used to introduce more general themes such as the climate (the use of new media, virtual reality, etc.) and make the latest research results accessible
- Introduction of educational programmes offering field and preservation actions, and participatory sciences
- Production of scientific and cultural content on the challenges facing the oceans
- Exchange and cooperative partnerships at local, national and international level with every type of actor (institutional, political, educational, scientific, NGOs, media, etc.)
- Invite the public to become involved by proposing positive citizen initiatives and support for conservation actions on the ground
- Follow visitors beyond the confines of the aquarium with an online presence and social networks, a form of communication that follows the relationship past the aquarium visit and supports the societal commitment
- Adapting to crisis situations. Aquariums in the context of coronavirus, for example: maintaining links and the ongoing mobilising role beyond the confines of the aquarium
- Communication about the perception of aquariums as preservation actors and showcasing the evolution of the "mission" of aquariums
- How can the actions contribute to the economic health of aquariums?

A political commitment for action to support the oceans

Keynote speaker:

The speaker will be a representative of a government body committed to protecting the oceans and sustainable development.

Some details of the theme:

- The mission as the mouthpiece for ocean-related issues among public and private decision-makers
- Setting up, participating in and communicating about research performed by aquariums and their partners in their facilities or in the field

- Developing the role of “ambassador” and communicating the outcomes of the public consultations carried out in the aquariums to the decision-making institutions
- Sharing the challenges, advising and taking part in decisions about the management and preservation of the marine environment

Main theme divided into 8 secondary themes

IAC 2022 will give aquariums the opportunity to share their commitments, innovations and experiences grouped together in 8 secondary themes:

- Technological developments
- Reproduction
- Animal care
- Conservation
- Scenographic design and production of cultural and scientific content
- Education, raising awareness, mobilisation
- The role of aquariums in society
- Adapting to a global pandemic situation

Some details about the secondary themes:

Technological developments

Aquariums are constantly developing their techniques for monitoring water, building new pools and using more sustainable resources for energy.

This secondary theme will discuss how aquariums organise, engage and cooperate with innovative companies to expand in a context where environmental, societal and economic sustainability is increasingly required.

Reproduction

This secondary theme will be devoted to innovations and new advances regarding species reproduction in aquariums.

Knowledge about reproduction is a major issue in species conservation.

Criticism about taking species from their natural environment is growing increasingly strong. By cooperating in networks, the aquariums of the future will control the reproduction of species to work towards taking zero animals in the wild; they will also improve knowledge about the natural environment and participate in ecosystem management.

Animal care

Animal care, veterinary advances, medical training on species and the daily work of keepers means it is possible to respond to the well-being of animals and to reassure visitors about captivity. This secondary theme will present the new advances and the commitments introduced inside aquariums.

Conservation

Aquariums play a major role as active participants in conserving vulnerable species and endangered ecosystems.

With their long-term breeding methods and programmes, together with their in-situ and ex-situ partnerships, aquariums strive on a daily basis to improve scientific knowledge and develop research into species and ecosystems so they can take concrete action to conserve them.

Scenographic design and production of cultural and scientific content

Aquariums must constantly reinvent themselves in order to retain and attract new visitors. They can do this by taking advantage of new methods of communication and mediation so they can

explain the major challenges of biodiversity and ocean conservation to a very wide audience, from young children to families and an informed public.

How can scenographic design be used to respond to these challenges? What is new in terms of exhibitions and content? What is the positive and negative feedback? How is the visitor experience of the future to be defined?

Education, raising awareness, mobilisation

As priority educational instruments for discovering and raising awareness about marine biodiversity and fauna, aquariums are platforms for discussion and engagement on all environmental issues and challenges that threaten the oceans and humankind, as well as unique places for finding solutions together. Whether during visits and workshops, beyond the walls of the aquarium or via digital tools, aquariums are constantly reinventing themselves to provide educational and teaching tools, and to demonstrate their role as leaders in educating about the sea.

The role of aquariums in society

Aquariums are ideally positioned to play a role as a catalyst between the various players in society and the marine environment: the general public, the media, businesses, politicians, scientists, mediators and educators. Aquariums have been setting up collaborative programmes for many years with all stakeholders so they can conduct research projects and communication and advocacy campaigns on a variety of themes, such as the sustainable consumption of seafood, climate change, innovation, etc. These joint projects make it possible to engage all stakeholders and encourage them to work together as far as the end user, as well as acting as a powerful lever of communication and for delivering concrete actions. In an evolving society that risks being divided about the issue of displaying animals outside their home environment, aquariums are taking up a position in the debate to assert their role and publicise their actions.

Adapting to a global pandemic situation

How have aquariums experienced and implemented measures to adapt to a global pandemic? What experiences can be shared, what lessons learned and what should the future strategy be?

Other activities included in the programme

- Pre and post-congress tours: visits to European aquariums
- Poster presentations throughout the congress with daily poster sessions
- Trade show, meetings with specialist companies
- Self-guided tours of Nausicaá and "backstage" guided tour
- Visits, etc. exploring the city
- Visits, etc. exploring the region

Public consultation

A public consultation with all IAC 2022 participants and aquariums will be launched to find out and inventory what aquariums have put in place over 30 years.

This consultation will be used to review 30 years of engagement by aquariums and to ask the question: What is your vision of the future?

The analyses of the survey results will be available as an area of study for students in local and national universities (social sciences and anthropology courses).

Public conference on the theme of Aquariums Worldwide: 30 years of Active Ocean Engagement

The public conference will be an opportunity to present the outcomes of the public inquiry and to introduce independent stakeholders who will shed light on the matter and provide a different perspective on the major role of aquariums.

Provisional programme

TIME	Sunday oct-30	Monday oct-31	Tuesday nov-01	Wednesday nov-02	Thursday nov-03	
05:00-07:30		Special programme for virtual attendees Welcoming speeches - Presentations - Goodies	Special programme for virtual attendees - Presentations - Goodies / Guided tour of a fish processing company	Special programme for virtual attendees - Presentations - Goodies / Guided tour of the fish auction	Special programme for virtual attendees - Presentations - Goodies	
08:00-08:30	Registration	Registration	Registration	Registration	Registration	
08:30-09:00	Registration and Pre Congress Tours	Welcoming	Keynote speakers -scientific engagement	Keynote speakers-societal engagement	Keynote speakers - advocacy	
09:00-10:15		Speeches	Reproduction *5	Education *5	Conservation *5	
10:15-10:45		Morning Coffee Break / poster session				
10:45-12:30		Keynote speakers - general theme	Reproduction *7 / Workshop 1	Role of aquariums in society *7 / EUAC General Assembly	Conservation *7 / Workshop 3	
12:30-14:00		Lunch				
14:00-15:45		Animal Care *7	Conservation *7 / Workshop 2	Role of aquariums in society *3 +Collaboration *4	Collaboration *7 / Workshop 4	
15:45-16:15		Afternoon Coffee Break / poster session				
16:15-17:15		Animal Care *3 + scéno *4	Collaboration *7	Collaboration *7	Collaboration *4 / Workshop 5	
17:15-18:00					Closing ceremony	
18:00-19:00			Sea trip / City tours / Fishing and aquaculture facilities tours	Sea trip / City tours / Fishing and aquaculture facilities tours	Sea trip / City tours / Fishing and aquaculture facilities tours	Sea trip / City tours / Fishing and aquaculture facilities tours
19:00-22:00	Opening Reception at Nausicaa, National Sea Centre	Special programme for virtual attendees - Presentations - Goodies / Dinner at restaurants, city centre	Special programme for virtual attendees - Presentations - Goodies / Dinner at restaurants, city centre	Special programme for virtual attendees - Presentations - Goodies / Dinner at restaurants, city centre	Special programme for virtual attendees - Presentations - Goodies / Gala Closing Banquet	