



**The Stone Soup Leadership Institute's  
Global Blue Job Shadow Day™ 2026  
by Miguel Roque, Blue Economy Youth Ambassador, Portugal**

The Global Blue Job Shadow Day™ unfolded as a truly global moment of exchange, bringing together communities from Lisbon, Peniche, Marin County (California), and Newport (Rhode Island). Each location represented a different sector of the blue economy, from aquaculture to water management and from blue finance to blue technology. While each reflected their own local issues - together they shared a common challenge: the growing gap between young people and opportunities within the blue economy.

The Stone Soup Leadership Institute provided a unifying framework for this global exchange. The Global Blue Job Shadow Day™ is more than a day - it's a foundation, a commitment to connect ocean literacy with workforce development.

This was the most striking outcome of the event. Across all geographies and sectors, the message was consistent. The issue is not a lack of interest or motivation from young people, nor a lack of opportunity within the blue economy. The challenge lies in visibility, access, and connection. Young people do not see where the opportunities are, how to access them, or how their education translates into real careers. And blue companies, institutions, and training centers are struggling to find qualified people. This shared conclusion, voiced by all stakeholders, marked an important moment of alignment.

What this first Global Blue Job Shadow Day™ achieved was confirmation. Confirmation that this challenge is widely recognized – and that it is urgent. And, most importantly, confirmation that private companies, public institutions, educational organizations, and local communities are ready to be part of the solution. This collective acknowledgment represents a crucial first step: the problem is openly shared and jointly addressed.

The experiences shared at the event illustrate how this challenge manifests in different communities. In Lisbon, where Blue Schools offer robust ocean literacy, there hasn't yet been a connection with blue skills and blue jobs.

In Peniche, Portugal, João Rito's sustainable aquaculture presentation demonstrated how innovation, science, and investments can create high-quality blue jobs while strengthening local economies. Sergio Leandro's project showed that when research institutions, entrepreneurs, and public authorities collaborate, it's possible to develop sustainable food systems, and create meaningful career opportunities, by actively involving students.

In Marin, California where there is a "silver tsunami" in water management jobs, there is a lack of awareness of these jobs that people can be trained for and develop transferrable skills to other blue pathways like aquaculture.

In Newport, Rhode Island, the focus on blue technology and renewable marine energy highlighted how the blue economy depends on skilled technical labor: electricians, technicians, engineers, and innovators, which are in short supply. It was heartening to see how organizations are developing internships, vocational education, mentorship, and early exposure to real working environments. When young people discover these blue jobs and hands-on experience, they are eager to learn and pursue blue pathways.

Across all communities, one recurring theme was the importance of exposure and bridges. Awareness is not automatic. It must be built intentionally, through collaboration between industry, government, and education. Initiatives that open doors, showcase real projects, and allow young people to interact directly with professionals are the key tools to close the gap between talent and opportunity.

The Institute directly responded to this challenge with the video presentation of its Blue Economy Career Pathways Platform, a practical tool designed to help young people to explore blue economy careers, understand required skills, and identify educational and training programs to navigate these blue pathways.

This first Global Blue Job Shadow Day™ succeeded in something fundamental: it brought all stakeholders to the same table, aligned around the same challenge, and affirmed their commitment to work together to close the gap between youth and opportunity. As the event concluded, a shared call to action and commitment emerged.

*The future is built when the public sector, the private sector, and the education institutes work together. This is the moment to build together bridges between knowledge and opportunities, education and employment, and young people to the future of the ocean. Investing in young people is investing in our future blue.*

**Marisa Lameiras de Silva, Director General for Maritime Policy**

As a young person, this represents an encouraging and necessary step. The interest is mutual. The willingness is there. This first step confirmed that the right people are ready to take responsibility for it.

The question now is if our business communities will open their doors and invite young people to join them to build the Blue Economy. If this momentum is sustained, collaboration deepened, and pathways made visible, it can grow and thrive with innovation and impact, through its people. And that is where its future truly lies.

*This event deserves enormous public recognition. The blue economy is one of the top priorities of our government's action. Congratulations to the organizers. You can count on the Government of the Portuguese Republic to be at your side in future initiatives. Your success will be Portugal's success.*

**Salvador Malheiro, Secretary of State for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs**



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