



PRESS RELEASE

The 1st Greek Seagrass Forum in Athens concludes: Making the invisible visible for the protection of seagrass meadows

Athens, May 2026

The 1st Greek Seagrass Forum has come to a close, leaving behind a strong imprint of cooperation, knowledge and shared commitment for the protection of seagrass meadows in Greece and the Mediterranean, in seas and on coasts, with a focus on the Posidonia meadows. For three days, in the center of Athens, people from different sectors met for the first time with a common goal: to join forces for one of the most critical, but often unseen, ecosystems of the sea that is also a priority habitat at the national and Mediterranean level. The participation was impressive, almost moving. Specifically, representatives of 62 organizations participated in the Greek Seagrass Forum, of which 27 were Greek and international organizations, 10 businesses operating in the tourism sector, 11 institutional-public bodies, 7 research and academic institutions, 3 municipalities and 4 schools in Greece and abroad.

Seeking to make the invisible visible for the protection of seagrass meadows in Greece, the Greek Seagrass Forum was organized by the Greek Islands Seagrass Alliance (GISA), with the contribution of the program's partners, namely the Cyclades Preservation Fund (CPF, coordinator), the Hellenic Center for Marine Research (HCMR), the Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature (HSPN), the Ionian Environment Foundation (IEF), the Argosaronic Environment Foundation (AEF), and the environmental organization Aenaos Thalassa, with funding from the Seacology Foundation. In addition to the scientific contribution of the HCMR, which is a common partner in all projects, the contribution of the Mediterranean Blue Forests projects, coordinated by WWF Greece, which focuses on mooring management issues, as well as the Interreg Euro-MED ARTEMIS, coordinated by Green Tank, which focuses on the restoration of degraded seagrass meadows, was also particularly important. The Forum was held in collaboration with the French Institute of Greece, which hosted the three-day event, which was attended by more than 260 participants.

A common meeting place

From the outset, the Forum was a substantial effort to bring together scientists, government agencies, organizations, businesses and civil society representatives to exchange knowledge and opinions on the protection, conservation and restoration of seagrass meadows in our country. The opening statements and the interventions of institutional representatives throughout the three-day event highlighted the importance that the issue of seagrass meadow protection is now acquiring at a national and Mediterranean level, while at the same time setting the framework for a more systematic dialogue in the future. The presence of representatives of the Greek state and European institutions

was



significant, including the Secretary General of the Natural Environment and Waters of the Ministry of Environment and Energy, Mr. Petros Varelidis, the Secretary General of Shipping and Ports of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy, Mr. Evangelos Kyriazopoulos, the Managing Director of the Natural Environment and Climate Change Organization (NECCA), Mr. Konstantinos Triantis, the Director General of Fisheries of the Ministry of Rural Development and Food, Ms. Alkistis Parpouras, the Director of the Green Fund, Mr. George Protopapas, the Deputy Director of the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR), Mr. Vassilis Kapsimalis and the President of the Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature (HSPN), Mr. Nikos Petrou, as well as senior executives of the Ministry of National Economy and Finance, the Ministry of Tourism, and central Directorates of the Ministry of Environment and Energy. Mr. Spyros Kouvelis also contributed to the dialogue, representing the European Mission for Oceans and Waters, while the messages of esteemed international figures such as Dr. Enric Sala (National Geographic Pristine Seas) and Kristin Rechberger (Revive Our Ocean), as well as Ms. Maria Damanaki (Oceans 5), were of particular importance. The tone of the event was also set by the keynote speeches, with Frédéric Villers from the Office Français de la Biodiversité (OFB) and founding member of the Mediterranean Posidonia Network (MPN), presenting the challenges and prospects for the conservation of Posidonia in the Mediterranean, and Dr. Maria Salomidi, Researcher at the Institute of Oceanography of the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research, focusing on scientific knowledge and management priorities for seagrass meadows in Greece, setting a strong foundation for the discussions that followed.

Science in focus

During the first thematic session, the scientific community presented a comprehensive picture of the state of seagrass meadows in Greece. Researchers from the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR) highlighted the distribution, status and pressures on the meadows, while the representative from the University of the Aegean presented the significant economic value of their ecosystem services. Particular mention was also made of the contribution of applied research, with the representative from Terra Solutions & WWF Greece focusing on pressures from shipping, and the Oceanus laboratory from the University of Patras presenting innovative approaches to large-scale mapping. Through these interventions, it became clear that scientific knowledge exists and is evolving, but its exploitation at the policy and implementation level is required.

From knowledge to practice

One of the most essential messages of the Forum was that protection cannot remain at a theoretical level. Civil society organizations, such as WWF Greece, The Green Tank, CPF, iSea, Katheti and Sustainable Sailing Greece, presented actions that connect science with local participation and daily practice. At the same time, initiatives from IEF and AEF highlighted the importance of collaboration at the local level, while examples from Poros, Crete and other areas demonstrated that,



even in environments with intense pressure, information and participation can lead to tangible results. The “bottom-up” approach emerged as a critical success factor.

Good practices and everyday applications

The third session of the Forum, coordinated by HSPN, gave voice to representatives of local government, education and the market, who are already positively integrating the protection of seagrass meadows into their activities. Local government bodies, such as the Municipality of Syros and the Municipality of Markopoulo, through their representatives, presented management and awareness-raising initiatives, while NECCA executives highlighted the importance of managing protected areas with an emphasis on good practices for coastal management. At the same time, businesses such as Blue Venthos Diving and Knossos Beach, as well as schools from Attica and Naxos, showed how environmental responsibility can be integrated into education, tourism and everyday practice. These interventions highlighted that change is already underway, but its gradual escalation requires solid institutional support.

The Mediterranean as a common space for action

The international dimension of the Forum was strengthened through the participation of organizations and experts from all over the Mediterranean. Representatives of OFB, Institut Balear de la Natura, Blue Seeds and Andromède Océanologie presented research and practices already implemented in countries such as France and Spain. At the same time, the international network The Conservation Collective highlighted the importance of cooperation between the public and private sectors, while these examples confirmed that the protection of Posidonia constitutes a common challenge and opportunity for the entire Mediterranean.

Funding going forward

The third day focused on the challenges and priorities of funding. Representatives of organizations and institutions, such as The Green Tank, the Captain Vasilis & Carmen Constantakopoulos Foundation, the Blue Marine Foundation and the Green Fund, highlighted the possibilities but also the existing gaps, under the coordination of Aenaos Thalassa. The participation of the General Secretariat for Sectoral Programme Management of the Ministry of National Economy and other institutional bodies underlined the need for better coordination, while it became clear that, despite the significant scientific and social mobilization, funding is required to be strengthened, especially for restoration and long-term management projects. At the same time, the need to strengthen trust and cooperation between all stakeholders was highlighted.



Parallel actions: education, knowledge dissemination and meaningful dialogue

In addition to the main sessions, the Forum highlighted with particular emphasis the importance of education, awareness-raising and open access to knowledge. In parallel to panel sessions, educational workshops for students were held, in collaboration with the HSPN, Cycladic Art and CPF, bringing children into direct contact with the world of seagrass meadows and cultivating a respectful relationship with the marine environment from an early age. At the same time, actions such as art workshops strengthened the creative approach to environmental education, demonstrating that knowledge can be transmitted in multiple and participatory ways.

Throughout the Forum, the space hosted an exhibition of posters and audiovisual material, where initiatives from all over Greece related to the protection and restoration of seagrass meadows were presented. This exhibition functioned as an open hub for the exchange of ideas and experiences, giving visibility to projects and actions that often remain less well-known, but have a substantial impact at the local level.

Finally, the closed working meetings of the third day were also of particular importance, where the dialogue became more targeted and practical with the impressive participation of political personnel and many executives of the Greek administration, as well as representatives from the tourism and business sectors. With the collaboration of the GISA initiative partners with other programs and bodies, specific issues were put on the table for discussion, such as institutional support for the protection of Posidonia (co-organized by GISA, Mediterranean Blue Forests, and Interreg MED ARTEMIS), anchorage management, cooperation with the yachting industry (co-organized by CPF and Sustainable Sailing Greece), and the pressure exerted by tourism on marine ecosystems (co-organized by CPF and HSPN). These meetings were not limited to the exchange of views, but laid the foundations for specific collaborations and next steps, strengthening the strategic role of the Forum as a space not only for dialogue, but also for the co-formation of solutions.

An initiative with a vision

The “1st” in front of the Greek Seagrass Forum is not a simple number, but a clear intention. The organizers’ ambition is for the Forum to establish itself as an institution and to continue to take place in the coming years, steadily strengthening dialogue and cooperation. The goal is for the next event to take place within the next four years, building on the experience gained and further expanding participation, and with the partnership, if not co-organization, of other initiatives.





Brief statements:

Petros Varelidis, Secretary General of the Natural Environment and Waters: *For us, the protection of the sea is a priority and this is reflected in the two large marine parks that we are creating: one in the Aegean and one in the Ionian. A very important element that we are protecting in these marine parks is the Posidonia.*

Evangelos Kyriazopoulos, Secretary General of Ports, Port Policy and Maritime Investments: *We are looking at how we can organize, on these 15,000 km of coastline that we have, more than France, a system of anchorages that is a win-win for everyone. For the environment, for maritime tourism and for activities such as trade and navigation. More generally, to have such a system that can serve the fisherman, the passenger, the tourist and of course, above all, the protection of the environment.*

Alkistis Parpoura, General Director, Directorate General of Fisheries: *Posidonia and, more generally, seagrass meadows are very important for all biodiversity, for the entire environment, for all organisms, not only because they provide oxygen, but also because they are points where marine organisms reproduce, create communities, and increase biodiversity in the sea.*

Konstantinos Triantis, CEO, NECCA: *It is beyond discussion for anyone to question today the importance of this habitat, this special component of Greek nature. I think that the great success of the Forum, and that is why we are happy to be here, is that it puts us all around one table. Academic institutions, state agencies, environmental organizations, funders, and thus the possibility of finding solutions increases. Because we all have the opportunity to listen to each other's perspective in order to arrive at something that will be both sustainable and for the benefit of the natural environment, but above all, it will be the responsibility of all of us, so we will serve it better.*

Dr. Maria Salomidis, Researcher, Institute of Oceanography, Hellenic Center for Marine Research: *For the first time, so many people from so many different organizations and services came together and sat down and talked about an issue that is truly so important and yet so few people understood it until now. What we have received from the public these days is wonderful. We understand that a very positive, very special momentum has been created for the protection of seagrass meadows and the sea in general and we intend to continue taking all this feedback from the public. We believe that we can achieve much more.*



Daria-Nefeli Vourdoumba, Director, Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature: *We believe that education is a very important part. That is where we want to put our own stone in education and public awareness.*

Annie Mitropoulou, Executive Director, Cyclades Preservation Fund: *Greece is slowly taking bold steps towards the big picture of marine protection and in particular on the issues of Posidonia, this priority habitat that must be protected. And we are here to be able to claim this dream that can become a reality if we work together better and more. We are so many and different that are directly related to the protection issue and we must be on the same page. Once again, let me emphasize that we all have to protect the Posidonia meadows both in the sea and on our coasts when we now encounter them as withered leaves. We are making the invisible visible this summer as well. Every summer, each of us can become our ally.*

[Link](#) for photos and videos.

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