

BEYOND
PLASTIC
MED

ISLANDS

**Hope for the future:
successful solutions for plastic pollution
in the Mediterranean islands by the
BeMed-Islands Community**

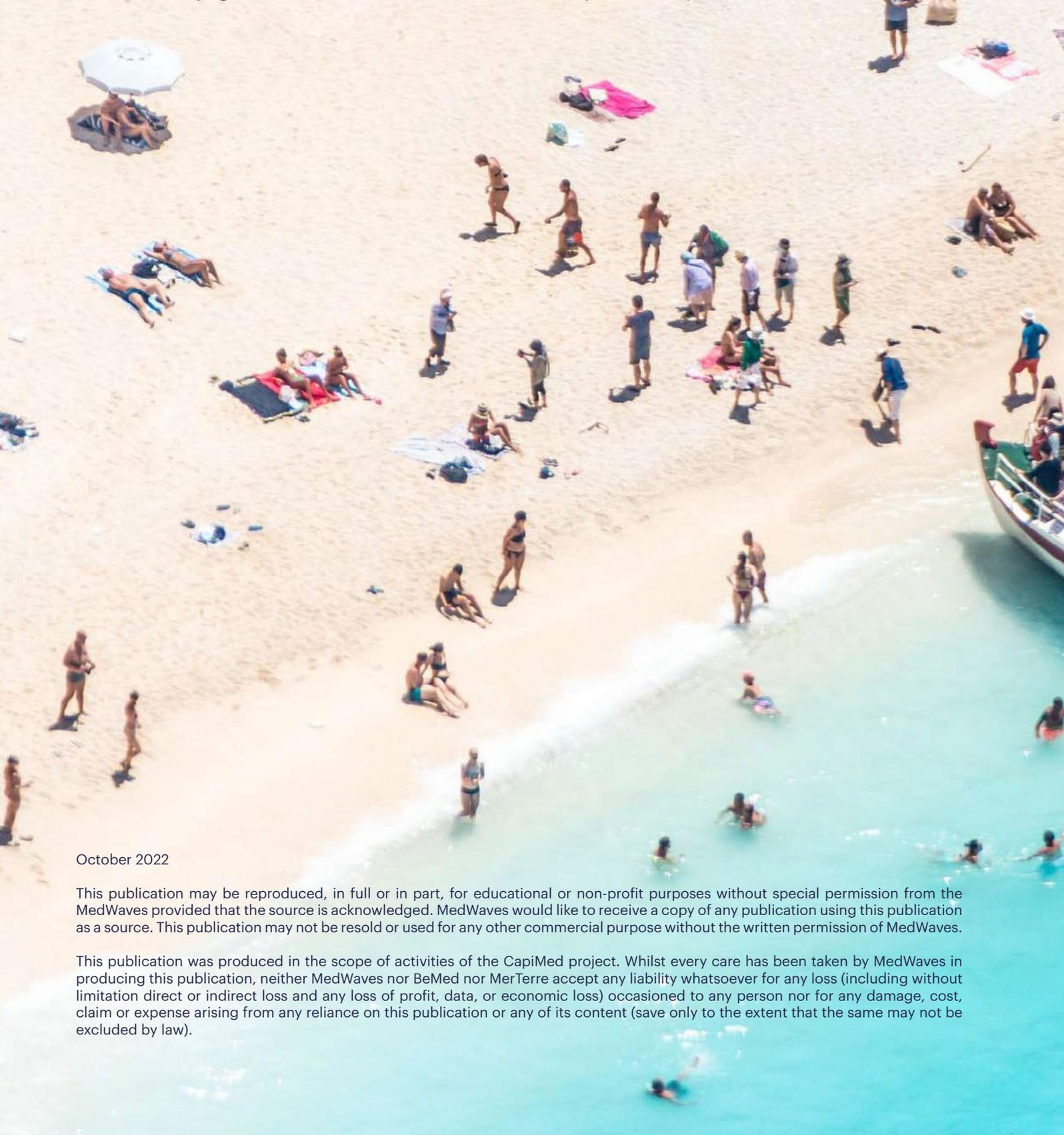
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“What you will discover throughout these pages is an unprecedented global effort by people living on islands, sharing the same dream...a plastic-free Mediterranean. Together, let’s make the dream come true”

Lucile Courtial,
Executive secretary of Beyond Plastic Med

Achievements by the BeMed-Islands community

200 businesses engaged

Plastic Free Balearics has certified 67 businesses as Plastic Free Guardian

13 legal texts

adopted thanks to the support to public authorities
Association Sunce in Croatia supported the city councils of Stari Grad and Sali to adopt a legal decision limiting single-use plastics in the operations of the municipalities

7 capitalisation events

to transfer results and impact policies

The Barcelona Convention welcomed the contribution from the BeMed-Island community, and recommended their results and tools for capacity building and peer-to-peer learning

175 alternatives

to single-use plastics found and promoted, avoiding nearly 22 tonnes of plastic waste

SMILO distributed 35,000 cutlery items made of local giant reed to shopkeepers in Hyères islands, south France

Improved access to waste management infrastructure

In Djerba (Tunisia) 3,000 households with access to separate waste collection

13 tonnes of waste collected

through Clean-up actions

Skopelos Dive Center 1,500 kg of plastic waste in Sporades islands, Greece





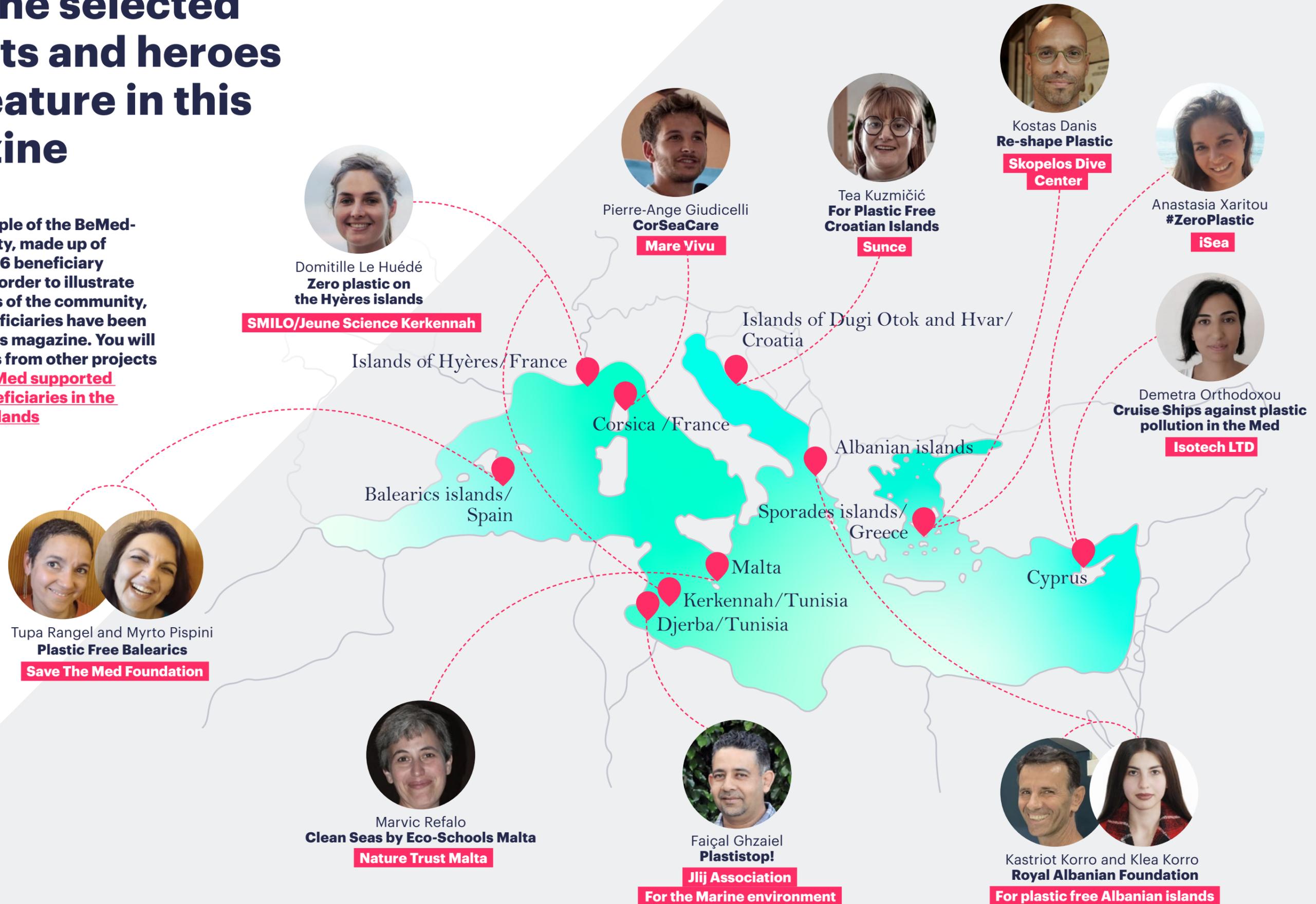
Credit: Mariano Cebolla, PNDE

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Meet the selected projects and heroes who feature in this magazine

This map is a sample of the BeMed-Islands community, made up of 30 projects and 26 beneficiary organisations. In order to illustrate the achievements of the community, a number of beneficiaries have been interviewed in this magazine. You will find all the details from other projects in the section **BeMed supported projects and beneficiaries in the Mediterranean islands**





Kerkennah, Tunisia. Credit: SMILO & Analogue

The Mediterranean islands: fragile places, leaders of change

It is now well known that the Mediterranean is not only a hotspot of biodiversity, but one of the most polluted seas in the world. Plastic pollution has been recognised as a major threat to biodiversity and approximately 229,000 tons of plastic are flowing into the Mediterranean every year.¹

The main reasons for heavy plastic pollution on islands are the high population densities, the lack of consistent waste-management schemes, and the large influxes of tourists and strategic merchant shipping.² The Mediterranean islands are extremely vulnerable. Isolation, limited size and fragile ecosystems are common challenges for all. However, most efforts to minimise and mitigate the impacts of plastic pollution are focused on the mainland and little attention has been paid to the islands and how this problem affects them. The Mediterranean islands and their communities are witnessing plastic pollution and its effects on a daily basis, with drastic and particularly visible effects on biodiversity loss, especially in the marine environment. Plastic pollution also has social and economic impacts, affecting the coastal communities that live mainly of tourism and artisanal fishing.

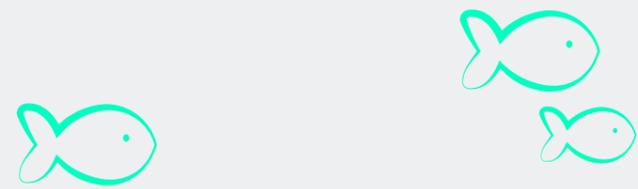
In order to counteract this trend, islands all around the Mediterranean are becoming leaders when it comes to tackling plastic pollution, often thanks to the support of Beyond Plastic Med (BeMed). Yet projects and interventions can be sparse, resulting in only small-scale impact, an absence of coordinated approaches, insufficient reproducibility, low uptake by local managers and low impact on regional policy processes, among others. This is why BeMed has commissioned MedWaves (formerly SCP/RAC) and SMILO to conduct a **capitalisation process**. Hence the **BeMed-Islands Community** was born, with three clear objectives: collaboration, transferring results and impacting policy. The Community is active in inventing local alternatives for fighting greenwashing, supporting development in business practices, implementing certifications and best-practice guides, pushing for bold and legally-binding action plans and overcoming a lack of resources.

This publication is not an “activity report”, but it has been conceived through interviews with project leaders with one goal in mind: to share the inspiration, key tools and lessons learnt with the largest number of people, in the most approachable way. This is about hope, so let’s get inspired and rise to one of the most crucial challenges of our time.

1 [The Mediterranean : Mare Plasticum – IUCN - 2020](#)

2 [Blueprint, an approach to scale up-solutions to achieve zero plastic pollution in the Mediterranean Islands – IUCN, SMILO, MedWaves, BeMed - 2022](#)

The challenge of plastic in Med islands



In 2017,
170 million visitors
in Mediterranean islands and coastal areas, nearly half of the visitors' arrivals in the region²

The average cost for beach litter collection and treatment in Mediterranean islands was
29.287€/km
in 2018³

Around
40 million items
leak from island into the sea every day, during high tourism season¹

In **Greece**, it was found that beach visitors are **willing to pay 0,67€ per year** for cleaner beaches⁴

A **sperm whale** washed up in Sardinia in March 2019 contained

22kg of plastic in the stomach⁵

References:

- 1 Grelaud & Ziberi (2020). The generation of marine litter in Mediterranean island beaches as an effect of tourism and its mitigation.
- 2 UNEP/MAP and Plan Bleu (2020). State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean.
- 3 BlueIslands Interreg Med project, based on 19 municipalities.
- 4 Brouwer et al (2017). The Social Costs of Marine Litter Along the European Coasts.
- 5 National Geographic (2019).



Capitalising on concrete solutions: the only way to scale up the fight against plastic pollution in the Mediterranean islands

The BeMed-Islands capitalisation process, led by MedWaves and SMILO, was designed to magnify the impact of BeMed-supported projects in islands. To rise to the challenge we face, capitalising on knowledge is only the first step in a wider strategy aimed at scaling up solutions that work, so they can be implemented all around the Mediterranean Basin. Here is the recipe for success!

"There is a need for us to work as a community and to be better coordinated to break silos if we are to effectively deal with the marine litter problem. We must consider global, national, regional, and local initiatives to develop actions and ensure the transfer of good practices into our projects across the Mediterranean"
Magali Outters, MedWaves

Capitalisation process



Upscaling and transferring to other islands

Building a community

Impacting policies

Through specific call projects
5 projects

Through regular calls
25 micro-initiatives

Total investement
>640.000€

26
Beneficiary organisations

52 islands

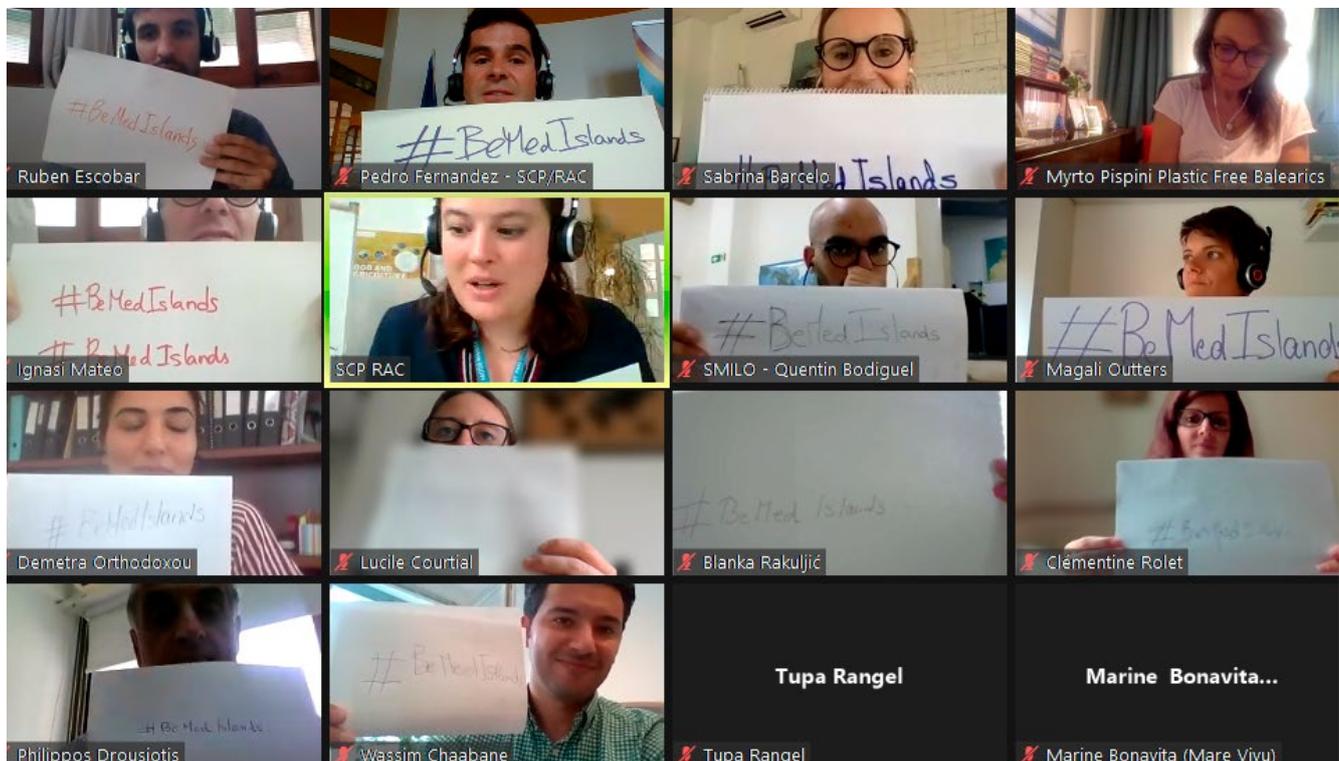
Biggest Cyprus with 9.251 km²
Smallest Pake in Albania with just 0,3 hectares



Foster collaboration by building a community and acting like one!

To foster collaboration between the different projects, creating a community was the first and most essential step. However, given stakeholders' busy lives, the main risk was creating a mass of existing projects and individuals rather than a community of people helping each other to boost their projects and inspire one other.

Building this brand-new community required time and meetings to understand individual and collective needs, assets, and potential synergies. With this in mind, six themed workshops were organised to share experience.



First online meeting of the BeMed-Islands Community, focusing on communication

The first key step was to achieve a shared identity and maximise visibility, through a coordinated communication strategy. A [website](#) and shared toolbox were created to lend visibility and reinforce the programme, the organisations, and their initiatives.

As with any collaborative project, the communication material was not always used

in the same way, and not to the extent desired by each stakeholder. However, the main achievement of this communication strategy is the improved online visibility that the BeMed-Islands community and its projects now enjoy, along with a sense of unity.

“One of the main keys to success when building a community is making sure members feel they benefit from it, grow with it, and go further by exchanging with others”

Pedro Fernández, MedWaves

As such, the **community workshops** were focused on experience-sharing so project owners could identify the potential for reproducibility, build competence and common knowledge.

Transfer lessons to build capacity and create partnerships: the importance of an open approach

The topic of marine litter and, more specifically, the issue of plastic pollution and its consequences in the Mediterranean, have rarely been covered more extensively than in recent times, both in mass media and by international leaders at official events. It is true that there are now thousands of initiatives and projects aimed at reducing plastic pollution in the Mediterranean, which is a beacon of hope. The problem is that too many of these projects do not focus on what already exists, or on collaborating and making themselves heard by one other, leading to a significant loss of resources spent on projects that could have had more impactful results had they joined forces.

“One of the main targets of the BeMed capitalisation process was to transfer results and testimonies through open events addressing the essential stakeholders and components needed for a consistent and effective project tackling plastic pollution”

Sylvain Petit, SMILO

The official launch and presentation of the project was at the Monaco Ocean Week on 25 March 2021 with the event: **“Bringing Mediterranean islands together to stop plastic pollution through the BeMed initiative”**. From the start, this guaranteed extensive exposure to the public, institutions, and existing regional initiatives, key among them the *Plastic Free Waste Islands Med initiative* from the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), the European Interreg Med *Biodiversity Protection Community* and the *Clean Blue Alliance* from Common Seas.

Most importantly, this official launch led to further online events that allowed stakeholders to identify, formulate and formalise concrete collaboration in dedicated areas of action such as “Improving waste management”, “Reusing and finding alternatives to plastics”, “Experimentation and data collection”, etc.

Through the capitalisation process, projects have gained visibility with seven events. As the capitalisation evolved, the events focused on sharing the achievements of BeMed-supported projects in islands. This held particularly true at two events organised by Plastic Busters MPAs and at the Monaco Ocean Week 2022. Events in which BeMed-Islands actively participated were also a great opportunity for stakeholders to get an overview and discuss recent policy and scientific advances with regards to marine litter.



BeMed-Islands members and team at the dedicated session at Monaco Ocean Week 2022. Credit: JC Vinaj/FPA2

A lot of attention has been paid to enhancing the accessibility of the **results of BeMed projects** through a host of online events throughout the process, with systematic ‘open access’ to any working document or video recording produced. Where possible, these events were also open to the public. This ‘open’ attitude has been key to fuelling exchanges and triggering synergies inside and outside the BeMed community, notably with islander organisations interested in the project.

Mainstreaming strategy: key lessons on influencing and improving current policies and practices

The third and ultimate target of the capitalisation was to channel the project outcomes into regional processes, as well as providing direct support for projects to reach institutional stakeholders.

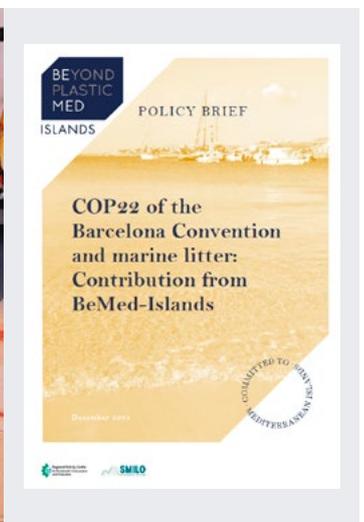
The active involvement of policy- and decision-makers in partnerships and their participation in the events were crucial to their success, as they are the ones who can adopt the lessons learned from good practices and translate them into practical policy results. If there was one lesson to learn from every single wonderful project presented in this publication, this would be it. Involving public authorities from the very beginning is the only option to ensure an action plan is not only adopted, but implemented.

Speaking of which, to mark the adoption of the upgraded Marine Litter Regional Plan by the Barcelona Convention COP 22 (December 2021), a **policy brief** was published to inform the Contracting Parties, and the entire community, of the contribution of the BeMed community. As its members are involved in most of the actions described in the Regional Plan, the community directly supports its implementation.

The capitalisation process also interested the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) who commissioned a joint document whose title speaks for itself: “**Blueprint: An approach to scale up solutions to achieve “zero plastic pollution” in the Mediterranean islands**”. The need to spread and reinforce this collaborative approach in the Mediterranean is now proudly summarised in the Blueprint preamble:

“All organisations, citizens and politicians need to work together and share information and results as there is one Mediterranean and it is shared by all of us. There could not be a unique solution but a summary of many. To solve the problem, we all have to work together as we all live from and by the same sea”

Mercedes Muñoz Cañas, IUCN



Representatives of the Contracting Parties attending COP 22.
Credit: UNEP/MAP

Finally, BeMed-Islands and MBPC (Mediterranean Biodiversity Protection Community) joined forces to organise a **dedicated session** on their communities at the Marlice 2022 International Forum on Marine Litter and Circular Economy that took place at the Aquarium of Seville,

Spain, 17-18 May 2022. This session was an opportunity to connect the work carried out within the framework of the Barcelona Convention with **MARLICE 2022**, with a particular focus on governance aspects in relation to the circular economy.



In the same vein, MedWaves drafted and presented a document entitled **Policy recommendations to address marine litter in MPAs to move towards Good Environmental Status in the Mediterranean**. In the official Conclusions and Recommendations document of the meeting, the UNEP/MAP Marine Litter Best Practices recommended its use as a “*tool for capacity building, peer-to-peer learning, as well as to prepare the recommendations mentioned [...] in multiple Mediterranean languages*”.



This illustration captured the main messages and conclusions of the session.
 Author: Yorgos Konstantinou/@imagistan.com



Credit: Anna Deniaud, Tara Ocean Foundation

Developing strategies & new regulations with public institutions



Thanks to Sunce, the legally-binding document signed by the municipality of Sali (Dugi Otok island) is going further than the recent European directive on single use plastic, notably by integrating zero-single-use-plastics events. Credit: Sunce

What can you do when public authorities lack the capacity, tools and resources to implement the actions needed to halt plastic leakage? How can you put in place a national action plan, bringing together 2,000 students, that shows drastic plastic waste reduction within just one year? How can you involve a hundred families to trigger change in a difficult waste management context? Find out in this article.

The three projects we cover here are based in the Eastern and Southern Mediterranean. They demonstrate the strategic role of NGOs and citizens in overcoming a lack of public resources. All of them have developed effective strategies to collaborate with public authorities and institutions to effect change.

A lack of public resources to combat plastic pollution: the amazing strategy of “Plastistop!” to get the job done on Djerba island, Tunisia

There are huge disparities between the Northern and Southern Mediterranean in the economic and human resources available for real public action towards plastic reduction. Lesser-known, however, is the outstanding capacity of determined Southern Mediterranean communities to overcome those obstacles. Plastistop!, a project conducted since 2017 in Melita, part of the Houmt Souk municipality on the island of Djerba, is a great example.

In Djerba, there is an absence of any public waste management infrastructure and no resources to implement selective waste sorting, despite being provided for in legislation. Led by the Jlij Association for the Marine Environment (AJEM), Plastistop acts as a link between authorities and citizens to ensure the law is effectively implemented. To collect as much plastic and recyclable waste as possible through a network of metal containers acting as collection points, the AJEM team first had to find the financial resources - and this wasn't even the hardest part:

“The groundwork is laid by civil society and NGOs. We feel it is our responsibility to help municipalities and the state in this task. It also seems like it's easier for us to get and manage money through calls for projects and donors than for municipalities that face many administrative barriers - a lot of requests for authorisation, etc.”, explains **Faiçal Ghzaïel**, Plastistop's project manager.

Gaining trust from the authorities and from citizens in a climate of distrust

The success of the whole system relies on the goodwill of different communities in Melita. To raise awareness of plastic pollution and waste sorting, the Plastistop team worked closely with communities, including a hundred families as well as business owners, schools, students and fishermen. The lack of trust from communities towards public authorities was the most difficult challenge to tackle, admits Faiçal: *“The association is based in Melita, and it was key to use our social relations to convince the families to work with us. As nothing has been moving for ten years now, there is a lack of trust between the inhabitants and the authorities. To gain their trust, we've started to organise micro-initiatives, awareness-raising actions in schools, clean-up campaigns, distributing cloth bags for shopping, etc.”*

In order to collaborate with the municipality of Houmt Souk and most institutions, 10 years after the Tunisian revolution, the Jlij association also had to gain their trust. The project had a rocky start, with their objectives and commitment tested by the authorities. Thankfully, they managed to gain their trust through a host of successful projects that always achieved what they had promised. The NGO also insists on the importance of being “apolitical” in order to work with all political representatives and be helped by facilitators with a strong position in public administrations at key meetings.

“My advice would be to always contact and include public authorities from the beginning. [...] What do you need? How can we help you? You have to develop the project with them. And then they really feel part of it, they are more involved and even promote it and champion it among other administrations”

Faiçal Ghzaïel



Credit: AJEM

In March 2022, 5 years after the launch and great success of Plastistop, the Ministry of Tourism, in partnership with the Ministry of the Environment, launched “Djerba without plastic”. The island became the first region in Tunisia to implement the recent law prohibiting the use of plastic bags. The news is bittersweet, though, as this programme seems mainly motivated by the requirements of tour operators increasingly seeking clean

destinations, rather than environmental concerns from the authorities. While we welcome the great achievements of AJEM in raising awareness among communities and collecting recyclable waste on Djerba, no initiative should have to replace a decent public waste management system on the island. The investment must come from public authorities. Sadly, citizens are still waiting.



Awareness events were organised in Djerba. Credit: AJEM

Global issue, local solutions: how “For a plastic-free Croatian islands” is pushing for change, municipality after municipality

Tea Kuzmičić works for Sunce, a flagship NGO founded in 1998 in Croatia and specialised in nature and environmental protection. Having always based their projects on scientific indicators, Sunce has developed an expertise and interesting methodologies for supporting change in public policies based on scientific evidence and a collaborative approach.

Raising awareness among public leaders for a collaborative action plan

One of the most original aspects of this project is the clever way in which Sunce has supported the drafting of two exemplary and legally-binding decisions regarding plastic pollution in the municipality of Sali (island of Dugi Otok) and the city of Stari Grad (island of Hvar).

Sunce took great care in choosing two places that were eager to change. As the two islands of Hvar and Dugi Otok are highly impacted by plastic pollution, they wanted to be pioneers in Croatia in addressing the issue. The NGO gathered complementary stakeholders to ensure the best possible action plan: local authorities, utility companies, and other public institutions such as touristic boards, museums, both in Stari Grad and in Sali. Tea explains: *“We took them on a couple of study trips and organised workshops, and they had the opportunity to see examples of good practices that they could use in their work. We provide them with professional support in enhancing the system, which is the key point”*.

The action plan was presented during a 3-day workshop in Sali and in Stari Grad with a

“back-and-forth methodology” that gave rise to a collaborative project. The final documents were signed two months later.

“Local authorities need NGOs because they don’t necessarily have the experience, the capacity, and the knowledge. In these cases, NGOs are a key element to push for such legislation”

Tea Kuzmičić

In proof of this, the decisions enabling Europe’s recent directive on single-use plastics to be implemented are even going further. An extensive set of measures has been adopted combining prevention and reduction initiatives, best-practice sharing, awareness-raising plans and clear objectives on improving waste management infrastructures. Placing the exemplarity of public authorities at the core, notably through green public procurement, the legal text is extended to all institutions and trade companies that fall under the authority of the city or municipality.

How to force public action from local to national level, in the long term!

In the past, similar action plans led by Sunce have proved that public authorities need support in order for a change of behaviour to last. As Tea puts it: *“There is a difference between writing a law and implementing it!”*. The NGO is therefore conducting regular evaluations with the public authorities, asking them to report the implemented actions.

Sunce would love to spread this action further, but the Ministry of the Environment has no plans to finance such a project at national level, the main reason cited being the lack of financial resources. Tea remains optimistic though, and following the success of this project, the NGO has been contacted by other municipalities keen to implement similar action plans. The project will also be replicated soon in natural protected areas of the Dalmatia region.

How collaboration between NGOs and voluntary authorities can work miracles: the success story of “Together for zero plastics in Albanian islands”

Another incredibly successful project achieved by the BeMed community, entitled “Together for zero plastic in Albanian Islands”, is showing us how complementary actions involving many sectors of society are powerful drivers to support a bold governmental action plan. Led by the Royal Albania Foundation (RAF), this project, which started in 2020, has already demonstrated impressive results in the region.



RAF has gathered more than 2,000 students from universities all around Albania to implement their action plan. Credit: RAF.

The power of 3: the right stakeholders, an integrated action plan and political will.

As **Kastriot Korro**, President of RAF, explains: “*This is the first project in Albania aimed at reducing plastic on islands and including the administrations/public authorities through 6 municipalities and the Ministry of the Environment. Together, we signed the first action plan describing a strategy for reducing plastic on 10 Albanian islands*”.

Klea Korro, RAF project manager, emphasizes that the first element of its success is that this project was built on a solid diagnostic of the 10 islands, with a key focus on the issue of plastic pollution. RAF then organised numerous meetings and workshops with different stakeholders and sectors of society, such as the government, municipalities and businesses. This collaborative process allowed them to build a bold action plan running until 2030.

The Youth Alliance: how thousands of students can speed up public action

Young people and specifically students had a key role in speeding up the process and implementing the action plan. The project was promoted from its early stages, notably through television, to all volunteers who wanted to make a change to the waste situation in Albania. The RAF team also tried to engage young people by turning plastic waste into artworks, through a competition with prizes for the best ideas.



“The response was overwhelming, more than 2,000 volunteers from different communities joined the project”

Kastriot Korro

“The Albanian government has always talked about waste on islands but not made any effort. The involvement of so many young people and the public meetings we had with civil representatives kind of pushed them to put this plan into action”

Klea Korro

A Youth Alliance was created, and those volunteers were trained to participate in hundreds of clean-ups on islands or collect data on plastic pollution in rivers. Some were also trained and sent to different islands during the summer to help beach guards apply penalties for tourists or people caught dumping bottles or plastic items.

Hopeful results for the entire Mediterranean

The official results of this action plan, according to the municipalities involved, are impressive. The plastic waste found through clean-ups in these island environments from 2020 to 2021 is diminishing, with reductions ranging from 53% (islands of Sazan and island of Zvernec) to 97% (a small island on Lake Prespes).

On the political side, the government of Albania approved a law to ban single-use plastic bags throughout the entire country. Three of the islands involved in the project have already decided to go plastic-free and Sazan, one of the bigger ones, has recently expressed its intention to follow suit.

Collaborating with businesses to develop effective & sustainable solutions for single-use plastic products



A great example of a perfect local alternative to single-use plastic items on the islands of Hyères, South of France. Credit: Antoine Boudin

All around the Mediterranean islands, projects from the BeMed community are working with businesses to drastically reduce their plastic use and impact on the marine environment. Many global synergies to centralise and spread good practices are also happening with global initiatives such as [BeMed Business Club](#) or the [Global Tourism Plastics Initiative](#), among others. Local businesses are also key drivers of change, especially on islands where the quality of their waste management routine can have such a major and visible impact.

In the following projects, the main difficulty for the coordinators was having to invent a brand-new tool or process while encouraging people who have never worked together to collaborate on a common goal.

Plastic Free Balearics: “with the right tools and enough businesses involved, the others will have to follow us on plastic reduction”

Things are moving in the right direction in the Mediterranean Basin, even when it comes to the hospitality industry, restaurants, hotels and take-away businesses - sectors that have been identified as key originators of single-use items. One of the most amazing projects in this field is Plastic Free Balearics, coordinated by **Myrto Pispini** and **Tupa Rangel**.

Restaurants, clubs, boats, events and hotels attract thousands of tourists to the Balearics every year, consuming massive amounts of plastic items. With a population that can quadruple in summer, mass tourism generates most of the revenue on the islands while putting them under great environmental pressure. To address plastic pollution, the *Plastic Free Balearics* team have created two complementary tools already used by a hundred businesses.

The first tool they have developed is the Plastic Free Balearics (PFB) certification. This certification shared by the four Balearic islands helps businesses to conduct a full assessment of their plastic footprint thanks to a rating system ranging from one to five stars. It has already gathered a hundred signatories. PFB also offers

tools and alternatives in order to comply with the current Balearic Waste Law and European regulations.

The second tool they have created is **“A guide to honest alternatives to single-use plastics for the hospitality industry”**.

Its goal is to help the sector to reduce its environmental impact while putting an end to false alternatives and greenwashing. *“Most of the companies were happy, they wanted to improve and most of them said they wanted to change before getting certified so they could get more stars and display them,”* Tupa explains. *“We help businesses to comply with the law, which is a good way to engage them as most of them don’t understand what’s happening, which products are prohibited, etc.”*, Myrto adds.

Myrto and Tupa have been impressed by certain restaurants and even chains that have made profound changes, eliminating chocolate wrappers, replacing sugar sachets with sugar dispensers, eliminating drinking straws, and actively working on a deposit system for reusable take-away containers.

However, pushing for a change in habits among businesses and consumers also requires the transformation of a market from single-use plastic items to honest and affordable alternatives. As such, the Plastic Free Balearics team has faced concerns from the plastic industry, such as suppliers of plastic items and bioplastics.

As Tupa explains, *“Sometimes businesses want to change, but the difficulty is the market and a lack of suppliers with alternatives [...] We have always worked with the aim of learning how to build an alliance, in order to develop honest alternatives. So we have also held meetings at the university with a few manufacturers and distributors for the most controversial items”*.

Overall, Myrto and Tupa remain hopeful, even for the businesses with only one star for their certification. This concrete action has already helped a massive quantity of plastic waste to be prevented.



More than 100 businesses have now been certified “Plastic Free” by Plastic Free Balearics. Credit: Plastic Free Balearics

“The project has been designed to be scalable [...] And if our change hits critical mass, the others are bound to follow”

Myrto Pispini

transport companies that establish a link between the island and the mainland, and the key companies in each sector on the islands”.

Zero Plastic on the Hyères Islands: “if the solution doesn’t exist yet, invent it!”

Talking about creating solutions when alternatives don’t exist is a challenge SMILO (which stands for Small Islands Organisation) has overcome brilliantly with its project “Zero plastic on the Hyères Islands”, conducted in the South of France. Most of the actions led by this small NGO are implemented through a label created to support sustainable territorial management on small islands.

As **Domitille Le Huédé**, project coordinator, explains, “*The first step for the island is to create an ‘island committee’, a local governing body that brings together all the stakeholders involved in managing an island, such as the municipality, government, civil society, inhabitants,*

When the island committee of Porquerolles island defined plastic reduction as one of the main priorities, the SMILO team knew there was a willingness to change. **The initial survey** revealed that many shopkeepers on the islands of Hyères, especially the younger ones, had already stopped using single-use plastics (SUP) because of the French law that came into force in 2021. However, the alternatives weren’t good: objects made mainly from bamboo or wood from China.

Acting as facilitators rather than managers, talking and exchanging with the various people and businesses that wanted to be involved, led SMILO to find an unlikely-sounding opportunity: inventing and producing objects using a local reed as an alternative to plastic. As Domitille explains: “*There is a national industry producing reeds, which is a small part of a wind instrument that you put in your mouth in order to play it. The international production is based in the South of France, right opposite these small islands but this industry uses only 20% of the plant, with the remaining 80% usually burnt*”.

SMILO partnered with the music industry and Antoine Boudin, a local designer from Toulon who had been working with the local plant used to make reeds for 10 years. They then had to invent a solution from scratch and produce objects that didn't exist before. Together, they worked hard for a whole winter to create objects that could be used by shopkeepers, drawing on extensive research and development to design them.

The dream **became a reality**, with stunning results. An ice cream spoon, a fork, a knife, and a straw were all made. 35,000 items were produced and distributed free of charge to 25 shopkeepers on the island, along with a massive communication campaign to spread the word among visitors and the public. Domitille emphasises the fact that the strength of this project was supporting a wide variety of stakeholders, all of whom contributed to make this experiment a success.

“This is one of the most concrete and innovative projects we have conducted. Someone came to me 6 months after presenting the experimental project on Porquerolles island and told me: ‘I can’t believe this is really happening’. The objects really can be found in shops all over the island in shops”

Domitille Le Huédé



Ice cream spoon made of giant reed.
Credit: SMILO

As with every new business, this successful experimental solution needs a viable economic model. To enable shopkeepers to buy the giant reed-based alternatives directly from the producer, there is a need for bigger machines and investments that no one can afford for now. A partnership between investors and companies would need to be forged in order to scale up these solutions and secure their long-term use. This is no doubt where the role of an environmental NGO that has paved the way for smart and bold alternatives comes to an end, and other stakeholders need to take over. As for the reproducibility of this successful initiative in other regions, SMILO is already conducting a pilot project using palm trees on the island of Kerkennah (Tunisia).

Far from being limited to hotels, restaurants and catering, initiatives to support businesses with concrete action plans are starting to spread throughout the Mediterranean in many different sectors.

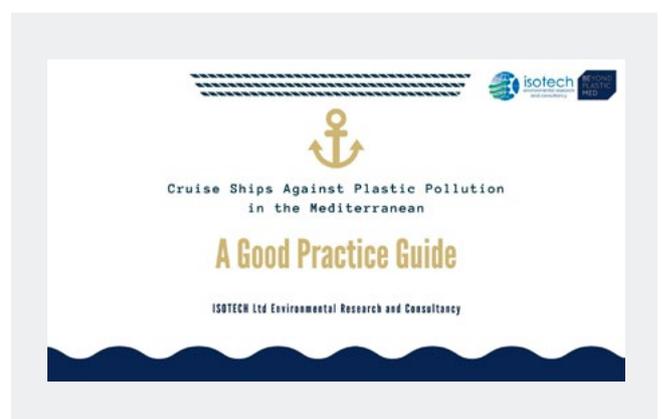


Credit: Toni Paul - Pixabay

Cruise ships against plastic pollution in Cyprus: “Listen to them!” The importance of listening to businesses’ needs with the right attitude in order to effect change

The shipping industry does not necessarily spring to mind when thinking of an easy sector to change, especially given that the total number of cruise passenger visits to Mediterranean ports in 2019 reached 31.2 million. Cruise Ships against plastic pollution in the Med, a pilot project being led in Cyprus by Isotech, is proving how an open attitude can make certain big businesses make the right moves towards plastic reduction.

Isotech is a small firm specialised in environmental research that offers consultancy services and work on policy development in many countries, specifically related to marine litter, pollution and rising sea levels. **Demetra Orthodoxou**, a biochemist and the project coordinator for the firm, explains that most of the work lay in bringing key players to the table in order to understand their difficulties and work together - something most of them were happy to do. The operation was a success and Isotech managed to centralise solutions from that groundwork in **“Cruise Ships Against Plastic Pollution in the Mediterranean. A Good Practice Guide”**.



This guide serves as a key tool to help meet the project's goals, as it includes effective and easily applicable practices that can be implemented both by ship management companies and seafarers to ensure that waste on board is minimised. The first step to success was to conduct a diagnostic assessment.

“My main advice would be: ‘Listen to them’. Sometimes, because we work in the environment and are aware of environmental issues, we might be misled into thinking that we need to teach people about environmental subjects [...] but in most cases you don’t have to. The shipping industry is very aware of its environmental obligations”
Demetra Orthodoxou

This open attitude and collaborative approach were important. Demetra was happy to see that many companies were already trying to replace single-use plastic items such as straws or plastic bottles and that those alternative solutions could be financially profitable compared to the thousands of plastic items brought on board and used by passengers.

“We worked with them in a very participatory way to come up with a list of the main problems they were facing and existing solutions [...] It was really positive because they obviously have bilateral communications but were never brought together around the same table for a joint project on the same issue”, she explains.

Demetra realised that one of the main challenges faced by the cruise ship industry was disposing of the waste that has to be sorted on board when docking at international ports with different facilities. Indeed, most ports dispose of the sorted waste in one container and then mix it all up again, which can be discouraging for companies. At a European level, efforts are being made under the **action plan for the circular economy** to improve waste-to-port reception facilities, but a global approach is needed all around the Mediterranean to implement solutions that work. When asked for the secret to rolling out this initiative, Demetra doesn't hesitate: *“Involving the key authorities in the development of this action plan helped get a very positive response from the businesses involved, by lending a value to the initiative”*.

Improving waste management on islands: the power of imagination!



The success of the Plastistop project lies in relying heavily on the involvement of local communities. Credit: AJEM

Plastic waste management and lack of infrastructure is a common issue faced by Mediterranean islands, where the situation is critical in several places. In order to be treated, the high volume of waste produced by tourists during the summer would need a massive investment in infrastructure that few islands can commit to alone. Meanwhile, sending waste to the continent often involves huge costs.

While no miracle is possible without drastic reduction at the source, the members of the BeMed community featured here are using relentless citizen power and a fair amount of imagination to deal with these complex issues and raise awareness.

Building a collaborative waste management system relying on communities: lessons from the “Plastistop!” project in Djerba island

One of the most touristic places in Tunisia is the island of Djerba. With its thousands of tourists in summer, its hotels, famous marine turtles, and magnificent beaches, few could imagine that, after 10 years, there is still no proper infrastructure to treat the 50,000 tonnes of waste produced annually on the island. In 2012, the only existing dump on the island was closed at the request of many inhabitants due to the smell. No alternatives have been implemented since then because of failures in negotiations between the municipality of Houmt-Souk and the Medenine Governorate. This stalemate led to a massive environmental strike in Djerba in 2013, the first of its kind in Tunisia. No proper solution has been found since then and the waste produced in Djerba still cannot be sent to the continent.

“Waste is staying on the streets and people are burning it, which creates lots of fumes. The municipality has found temporary solutions - sending waste to fields, then to first one wetland zone then to another, close to Telbet - but it’s an open-air dump with no form of recycling. So now, the residents of this area are also asking for this dump to be closed”

Faiçal Ghzaïel

Realising much of this waste was made of plastic, cardboard or aluminium that could be recycled to reduce the total amount of waste, AJEM launched Plastistop! in 2017 in Melita, a district of the Houmt Souk municipality on the island of Djerba, in partnership with the municipality and the National Waste Management Agency. The aim is to limit plastic leakage at sea by improving waste management on the island through infrastructure and the awareness and direct involvement of local communities.

Inventing a participative collection and treatment system with communities

To collect as much plastic and recyclable waste as possible, the Jlij team started to install containers made of galvanised metal in strategic places such as the main airport road, near shops, cafes, schools, close to densely

populated areas and also on beaches. In the meantime, to raise community awareness about marine pollution and recycling, the NGO conducted a series of workshops with schools, fishermen, business owners and hardware stores and involved a hundred families in this pilot programme. This colossal project is now bearing fruit.

Using data to monitor sources of pollution by building a flexible waste collection system

As they sorted the waste collected through cleanups and containers, the Plastistop! team developed expertise and a knowledge that allows them to identify, measure and monitor sources of pollution:

“We are specifically monitoring plastic when characterising to understand where the concentration zones are found and what people’s habits are. Filling speed also allows us to understand different things. If a container has not been filled up after two months, it’s either because there is not much waste produced or because there is a lack of awareness among residents. On the other hand, if a container is full after two weeks, we bring more of them to the area”

Façal Ghzaiel

This knowledge, shared with the municipality and the authorities, allows the NGO to implement a tailored strategy. The Plastistop! team puts 10 containers on popular tourist beaches in summer, when there is a lot of waste, such as drinks bottles, but only one in winter, for fishermen, while the others are moved to the city centre. They have also identified items linked to specific habits and sectors such as fishery: *“Fishermen use plastic bags*

to bring bait when they go fishing for blue crabs, which has a major impact on marine turtles [...] We can see when characterising that there is a huge quantity of waste on the beaches, but in really specific areas”.

Inventing a waste management system that benefits the community

As Plastistop! is in its third iteration, the team has developed a network of small businesses and recyclers to best process waste. Once collected, those businesses send the plastic to the cities of Tunis or Sfax on the continent, where it is used to produce plastic bags or plastic buckets.

With the money earned from the plastic collected, the association can buy equipment for schools and nursery schools, implement social support, plant trees and conduct social work in poor communities. This social aspect is important for the association, as the people involved are seeing their actions directly benefit the community.

Overall, Plastistop!’s greatest victory is probably its impact on people’s habits. As Faïçal concludes, *“There is a big change in behaviour among the population of families in terms of waste sorting and recycling. The quantity of plastic is so large, and the filling rate is much higher. People have understood they mustn’t throw waste into the sea. Workshops are also attracting more and more children”*.

Fab Labs, low-techs, upcycling: lessons from Skopelos and CorSeaCare projects

With the lack of waste management infrastructure on islands and the high cost of recycling, the rise of fab labs, low-tech machines and open-source projects such as **Precious Plastic** seem an interesting avenue to explore. However, low-tech solutions cannot work miracles, and require a solid framework to make sure they benefit the environment.

On the Sporades islands in Greece, the Skopelos Dive Center regularly organises underwater clean-ups as part of a wider commitment to plastic reduction, and environmental protection through citizen science programmes.

To raise awareness on marine pollution and recycling, the dive centre has launched the experimental scheme “*Reshape Plastic Skopelos*”, which aims to recycle plastic waste mechanically collected on the island using low-cost open-source machines by the Precious Plastic community. Through dedicated dives, they have collected an astonishing 1,500 kg of waste and have identified the main plastic items that end up at sea.

According to the team, the idea is simple. *“Very often, plastic ends up in the bin and from there goes into nature with toxic effects on the ecosystem. As an alternative, its life could be extended through a new identity thanks to the inherent plasticity and longevity of this excellent material”.*



Thanks to Skopelos Dive Center, “Reshape Plastic Skopelos” has recently produced coasters with the name of the project and the island that hosts it to raise awareness among communities. Credit: Skopelos Dive Center

“Reshape Plastic Skopelos” has recently produced coasters with the name of the project and the island that hosts it. These are its first objects made from clean plastic waste collected in the land.

As **Kostas Danis**, project coordinator, explains: *“We try to find some ideas for useful ordinary objects for both the local community and seasonal visitors. In October we’ll run some hands-on events mainly with schoolchildren and other local communities to inform, mobilise and engage more people, to make this initiative more viable and productive in the near future. We are also trying to find opportunities to collaborate with the municipality on several projects, such as the signposts for the island’s cycling and hiking routes”.*

For now, this upcycling experiment allows Skopelos Dive Center to raise awareness. By collecting most of the plastic items used by residents, they aim to trigger a change in behaviour, to make Skopelos island a more viable tourist destination, in line with its natural and cultural heritage.



In Malta, the association Zibel has also conducted underwater clean-ups through the Punent project. Credit: Zibel

Using low-tech and recycling machines to raise awareness is something **Pierre-Ange Giudicelli**, co-founder of the association Mare Vivu and its flagship programme *CorSeaCare*, has also experimented with. In Corsica, most of the waste management infrastructure consists of landfills. With 340,000 inhabitants and 3 million tourists in summer, most of these are saturated. To cope with the

major plastic pollution affecting the marine environment, the CorSeaCare campaign aims at collecting and characterising waste on Corsica's beaches each summer using low-tech pedal-powered trimaran kayaks. An amazing way to use clean energy for a clean coastline!

But for Pierre-Ange, low-tech was a way to be consistent from the start: *“Since the beginning of the project we wanted a good ratio between the energy used and the positive impacts of our actions [...]. There's going to be less and less energy available for us to carry out our work, so how can we deal with that? It's a pragmatic approach”*.

Despite the success of this mission to collect waste and scientific data, members of the NGO became frustrated, as they were still collecting waste that had ended up at the dump. Inspired by a Precious Plastic initiative in Corsica, they developed machines that aim to recycle ocean plastic. Committed to low-energy solutions, Mare Vivu decided to calculate the resources used by recycling ocean plastic, including the money that would have been used paying someone to do it, the time spent, the cost of the electricity to run the different machines, and the percentage of energy saved. The Mare Vivu team quickly realised it wasn't worth it.

“Making people think there is rentability recycling ultra-altered waste coming from the sea, well, it is a lie. Especially if they are collected by volunteers that are giving their time for free. Finally, our low-tech project couldn't prove there was an economic rentability in recycling ocean plastic and became a way to raise awareness about the limits of recycling”

Pierre-Ange Guidicelli

Using plastic from the sea is a real problem. Apart from its poor energy ratio when recycled, and the ecotoxicity of this plastic that becomes porous and contaminated in the sea, ocean plastic needs to be used with care. As Pierre-Ange puts it, *“I often talk with two people from the Precious Plastic project in Corsica. Unlike us, the plastic they are using is really clean, but they still have to wash it in washing machines and what they're realising is that they end up with loads of microplastics. So, if you're not aware of this, you send all this microplastic back into the water and in the sea again, while thinking you are recycling for the better”*.

Low-techs can offer a way to be consistent, and they also rely on the power of citizen-driven solutions to counterbalance the lack of efficient waste management. In short, we need them as much as possible if we want to be sustainable. However, regarding the massive quantity of waste affecting the Mediterranean islands, for now they remain complementary solutions. Low-techs and recycling cannot replace a waste management strategy.

As a good example of what political will and shrewd investment can do to improve waste management, Pierre-Ange cites the intercommunity of Calvi Balagne in Corsica. In a few years, it has halved the quantity of residual waste by implementing a good waste management scheme through door-to-door sorting, biowaste sorting and incentive-based measures for waste reduction.



Clean-up action using low-tech pedal-powered trimaran kayaks. Credit: Mare Vivu



Credit: Guillaume Bounaud (Fonds Tara)

Citizen science and awareness: the best way to effectively reduce plastic waste?



The #zeroplastic awareness program designed by iSea in Greece is based on citizen science data. Credit: iSea

Ask NGOs that have been organising litter clean-ups in the Mediterranean for a long time, and they'll tell you that there are more events today than ever before. The first encouraging development is the growing number of citizens getting involved, namely through citizen science or "participatory science", where their non-professional involvement is allowing progress made in scientific monitoring. The second is that organisers are increasingly convinced of the importance of characterising the waste collected using harmonised methodologies.

This new deal owes a lot to the NGOs that have put citizen science at the core of their project, fighting to give plastic pollution increasing exposure in the mainstream media. Historically, NGOs have played a massive role in ensuring plastic and macro-waste pollution is recognised by governments and the public as being as dangerous as any other type of pollution.

Using citizen science and data, they have been able to prove the issues, coordinate characterisation methodologies to set reduction goals and use the results to educate the younger generations. Many projects and associations are now building upon that work to drive home the point using original campaigns, art, and digital communication.

Data from clean-up actions is one of the most powerful tools to understand what's happening regarding the plastic pollution affecting islands.

One of the youngest and more successful projects of this kind on a Mediterranean island is the “*CorSeaCare mission*” from the NGO Mare Vivu in Corsica. Aiming at putting an end to the thousands of plastic items that end up on beaches in Corsica, CorSeaCare is gathering students to collect and characterise waste on Corsica's beaches. The NGO then uses this data to contribute to different scientific programmes.

As **Pierre-Ange Giudicelli**, co-founder of Mare Vivu, explains, “*We are a link between pure science, the democratisation of scientific knowledge and actions mobilising citizens. This is really important, we need everyone to address the issue [...] What's practical and virtuous with participative science is the fact that you are on the ground, so you get a better understanding of what's happening in your area in terms of the plastic pollution issue*”.

As on many Mediterranean island beaches, most of what they find is fragmented plastic. But depending on the beach they also find large quantities of cigarette butts, bottle caps and even cotton swabs. With this data and the expertise developed by understanding the reality behind the numbers, Mare Vivu has gained legitimacy.

By making it possible to monitor marine litter, citizen science data is now often used by scientists to complement their research.



Characterisation of plastic waste through CorSeaCare clean-ups. Credit: Mare Vivu

“Every year, our data is used by the French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea (Ifremer) and the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS)”

Pierre-Ange Giudicelli

The data is also centralised on the collaborative platform **‘Zéro Déchet Sauvage’**, created by the NGO MerTerre and officially supported by the French Ministry of Ecological Transition and Region Sud, to allow for a national monitoring process. By centralising data from clean-ups, it is helping to build a better understanding of macro-waste pollution in France to trigger action plans with public authorities and communities.

Pierre-Ange sees citizen science as a philosophy and a personal journey. *“It’s about informing yourself, contributing to scientific research, and at the same time accepting the fact that it is also your responsibility to act, it is more than just collecting data. This is about building an understanding, sharing a vision, becoming a member of a community that can act as a driver of change”*.

Citizen science: a valuable tool to raise awareness among different audiences through art

In Greece, **Anastasia Xaritou** from the NGO iSea, which specialises in aquatic habitat preservation, works on a regular basis with target groups using citizen science during missions such as Invasive Alien Species monitoring or underwater clean-ups with dive centres. The data collected fosters a better understanding of the issues and key facts to be highlighted.

As Project Manager of the campaign *#ZeroPlastic*, supported by BeMed since 2019, she has realised how facts from citizen science, coupled with art and mass communication campaigns, are powerful tools to raise awareness among people who don't feel that environmental protection concerns them.

"In 2019, according to our experience and reports, we realise people in Greece were not at all informed about the impacts of marine plastic pollution," she explains. "We started a social media campaign and created material with pictures of marine life affected by marine litter, along with environmental messages based on scientific results and data. It worked really well".

Building on the success of this first campaign, iSea launched a second campaign in 21/22 based on the same concept of using scientific data and promoting it with a new artistic twist. *"Our key strategy is to use scientific data in our campaigns to make them more friendly and easier for the public to understand. For this second 2021/2022 campaign, we also choose to use art, so the message becomes more familiar"* explains Anastasia, adding, *"this time, we chose to use real people instead of animals"*.

To succeed in raising awareness among different audiences, iSea decided to display their posters in different cafés around Thessaloniki, Greece's second-largest city. They took great care in choosing places attended by different types of people, such as students or tourists. They also visited a lot of schools to talk about marine pollution and the reality behind these messages.

As part of *#ZeroPlastic*, iSea also decided to create other pieces of art that would be impossible to ignore due to their size, originality or long-term presence in a large number of places. They created numerous small artworks near to bins and manholes, which became popular and were soon being made by students, refugees and people with disabilities. These groups agreed to choose a place they often attend and take care of it, creating an artwork in collaboration with iSea.

For World Ocean Day, the NGO spent the day raising awareness at the foot of the White Tower, the most iconic building in Thessaloniki. As soon as the sun sets, they lit up the tower in blue. *"It went viral in Thessaloniki, in the media and online and allowed us to spread the message about the project even further"*, says Anastasia. In addition, a massive mural near one of the main entrances to Thessaloniki will soon be produced, picturing a fish eating a cigarette, while another is chased by a sinister plastic bag, with the message "Don't feed the fish!"

"I already recognised the value of citizen science in data collection, but it is even more useful as an educational tool [...] I think the big mistake many NGOs make is the fact that no one is constantly working on something. You can see it with children in schools: it doesn't work that well with children if it's not consistent"

Anastasia Xaritou

Eco-schools Malta: the secret of long-term educational programmes using citizen science and data to raise awareness, from nursery school to university

Marvic Refalo is a teacher involved in Nature Trust Malta, and part of its activities is to run Eco-Schools programmes. These schools are present in more than 70 countries around the world. Teachers can use the same educational programme and its activities, all of which are aligned with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.

In Malta, Marvic has witnessed the great results of long-term educational resources integrated into the official curriculum, with adult former pupils now promoting Eco-Schools.

“One-off things never work, that’s the secret [...] You need to act in the long run with activities organised year after year, from nursery school to university”

Marvic Refalo

“Malta is a small island and obviously marine litter was a point of interest for everybody. Adults and children see pollution every day, even more in summer. Not only did children and students want to know more, but teachers in Malta were also asking for resources. So, with the BeMed project, we were even more motivated to create a pack for teachers dedicated to marine litter, covering as many activities as possible and collecting as much data as we could”, Marvic explains.

As 80% of Malta’s schools are involved with Eco-Schools, this huge network seemed the perfect conduit for gathering material and creating this educational pack to raise awareness on marine litter.

This BeMed Educational Resource Pack, entitled **“Clean Seas by Eco-Schools Malta”**, puts citizen science and data collection at the core of many activities. There is an original and integrated approach between the data children are learning to collect from clean-ups on beaches, mountains or in the streets, (sorting waste by size, material, trying to identify where the items are coming from), and how they can relate it to real-life consequences.



Using microscopes so children can see how small the pieces are. Credits: Mare Vivu

As Marvic explains, “most of the time, clean-ups mean picking up large items, but with children we’ve also started going another way, sifting the sand on the beach to see what remains. Then, we’ve been using digital microscopes that magnify to a high resolution, to give them an even clearer idea of how small the pieces are. They understand what turtles are eating, what fish are eating, what is ending up in seagrass”.

As the Nature Trust also rescues turtles and other marine animals, children can relate this knowledge to those animals, turtle nesting issues, entanglement, plastic ingestion, what turtles excrete during rehab, and more. By nurturing well-informed children who are able to understand an issue, find solutions together and monitor the results of the action plan they have implemented, the Eco-Schools programme is probably one of our brightest educational hopes for a better future.

Useful resources produced by the BeMed-Islands Community

Policy-making and legal texts

- [Albanian Islands Strategy and Action Plan](#)
- Action plans in Croatia
 - [Action Plan to Reduce Plastic Pollution in the Municipality of Sali for the Period 2021 – 2026](#)
 - [Action plan to reduce plastic pollution in the city of Stari Grad for the period 2021 - 2026](#)
- Legal texts addressing single-use plastics in Croatia
 - Decision City of Stari Grad: [English, Croatian](#)
 - Decision City of Sali: [English, Croatian](#)
- [Tunisia: legal decision on the sorting at source of plastic, cardboard and used oil in Mellita, Djerba](#)

Alternatives to single-use plastic products and engagement with businesses

- Guide to honest alternatives to single-use plastics: [English, Spanish](#)
- [Results of the study on single-use plastics on the Porquerolles and Levant islands \(France\) and proposals for sustainable alternatives, namely using giant reed](#)
- [Video about alternatives and their promotion on the Hyères Islands, South of France](#)
- [Cruise ships - best practices](#)

Education and awareness-raising

- [BEMED Educational Resource Pack – Clean Seas by Eco-Schools Malta](#)
- [#ZeroPlastic awareness material by iSea](#)

Capitalisation

- [Policy brief: COP22 of the Barcelona Convention and marine litter: Contribution from BeMed-Islands](#)
- [Technical sessions for the BeMed-Islands community](#)
- [Video-testimonies by end beneficiaries](#)
- [Capitalisation workshop at MARLICE](#)

BeMed supported projects and beneficiaries in Mediterranean islands

ISLANDS	ORGANISATIONS	TITLE
Djerba, Tunisia	Association Jlij pour l'Environnement Marin (AJEM)	Plastistop!
10 Albanian islands	Royal Albania Foundation	Together for zero plastics in Albanian Islands
Dugi otok and Hvar islands, Croatia	Sunce, Association for Nature, Environment and Sustainable	For Plastic Free Croatian Islands
Balearic islands, Spain	Fundación Save The Med and Plastic Free Ibiza	Plastic-Free Balearic
Islands of Hyères	SMILO	Zero-plastic pilot project on the Îles d'Or archipelago and replication in the Mediterranean Sea
Skiathos, Greece	MEDITERRANEAN SOS Network (MedSOS)	Active Skiathos Against Plastic bags (ASAP)
Cyprus	AKTI Project and Research Centre – Cyprus	Fighting Plastic Pollution in Cyprus: The Responsible Beach Bars
Cyprus	Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative	Prevent Plastic in the Mediterranean Sea
Cyprus	Friends of the Earth Cyprus	Stop the Plastic Flow
Balearic islands, Spain	Grup Balear d'Ornitologia i Defensa de la Naturalesa (GOB)	SOS Méditerranée: pour une mer sans plastique
Cyprus	Together Cyprus	#BeatPlasticCyprus
Cyprus	AKTI Projects and Research Centre	The Cyprus Responsible Coastal Businesses Network against Single-Use Plastics
Corsica, France	Association Mare Vivu	Mission CorSeaCare 2.0 A low-tech solution to upcycle plastics collected on Corsican beaches
Cyprus	Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative	Plastic Free Entertainment Cruises and Water Sport Activities

ISLANDS	ORGANISATIONS	TITLE
Cyprus	Isotech Ltd Environmental Research and Consultancy	Cruise Ships against plastic pollution in the Med
Malta	Nature Trust Malta	Clean Seas by Eco-Schools Malta
Malta	Zibel	Project Xibka
Cyprus	SPOT (Society for the Protection of Turtles)	Combating plastic pollution and raising public awareness in Northern Cyprus
Minorca	Menorca Preservation Fund	Local knowledge and action on SUP in Menorca Biosphere Reserve
Malta	Zibel	Project Punent
Cyprus	iSea, Environmental Organisation for the preservation of the aquatic ecosystems	#zeroplastic, awareness-raising campaign against plastic debris and microplastics
Zlarin and Krapanj, Croatia	Association TATAVAKA	TOWARDS A PLASTIC FREE ARCHIPELAGO a community of plastic free
Northern Sporades islands, Greece	Skopelos Dive Center P.C	Re-Shape Plastic
Cyprus	Healthcare without Harm Europe	Towards plastic-free healthcare in the Mediterranean
Cyprus	ISOTECH LTD	A shipping commitment against plastic pollution in the Mediterranean
Cyprus	Cyprus International Institute of Management	Reducing the plastic footprint in agriculture
Minorca, Spain	Go Zero Waste & Plastic Free Menorca	Towards Zero Plastic in Menorca

WALL OF HOPE!



“If our change hits critical mass, others are bound to follow”

Myrto Pispini (Plastic Free Balearics) on profound change in businesses behaviours

“What was lacking in our project was the political aspect. Now we need another strategy. We need to talk to those people while looking them in the eyes, with a clear plan, with pressure from the public and communities, so they get to work”

Pierre-Ange Giudicelli from Mare Vivu (CorSeaCare project) on the need for political will to ensure smart action plans are implemented

“I already recognised the value of citizen science in data collection, but it is even more useful as an educational tool, because it really makes you aware of the problem. The first step is to realise the problem - a change in habits and behaviour comes afterwards”

Anastasia Xaritou from iSea (#ZeroPlastic) on citizen science

“If you look at the shipping industry, there’s a lot of training involved, so if a company invests in environmental training and waste management as a core element of the training they are giving out, and it becomes a core value, then it will become ingrained in the company culture”

Demetra Orthodoxou from Isotech Ltd (Cruise Ships against plastic pollution in the Med) on how waste reduction could become the norm in the shipping industry

“There is a big change in behaviour among the population of families in terms of waste sorting and recycling. The quantity of plastic is so large, and the filling rate is much higher than before. People have understood they mustn’t throw waste into the sea”

Faiçal Ghzaïel from the Jlij Association For the Marine Environment (Plastistop!) on the success of their programme

“The government of Albania has approved a law to ban single-use plastic bags throughout the country. Three of the islands involved in the project have already decided to go plastic-free and Sazan, one of the bigger ones has recently expressed its intention to follow suit.

Kastriot Korro from RAF (Zero Plastic on Albanian Islands) on the positive consequences of their project

“It’s been an exciting project for me and SMILO, as we are trying to replicate concrete impact on the ground. And this is one of the most concrete and innovative projects we have conducted”

Domitille le Huédé from SMILO (Zero Plastic on Hyères Islands) on the success of their project



Menorca. Credit: Pedro Fernández

A few words of hope from the writer

Above all, this publication has aimed to give you hope and inspiration - probably because that's what this writing has given me.

Being a journalist working in the field of environment and plastic pollution doesn't make me feel optimistic every day. I am constantly reading new reports, each worse than the previous one. I often go back to the same beach, river, hill, to find roughly the same quantity of plastic waste - and sometimes even dead animals - and wonder how my efforts could possibly change anything. There are some challenges that seem intractable. How can you encourage the largest manufacturers in each sector to choose a healthy Mediterranean over profits for shareholders? How can you trigger significant change in plastic reduction when the most powerful plastic lobbyists openly state their intention to produce more of it? How can you challenge the lack of education among so many people? How can we change the economy and its indicators to protect life?

But there is hope. Hope from projects that work. Hope from amazing people.

During these interviews, I have been surprised by the number of project coordinators encouraged by the positive response they have had after bringing together people from all sectors, from business owners and hotels to schools or even shipping companies. This means that many people are open to change if you approach them with humility, integrity, and the right tools.

I've been amazed by the imagination of project coordinators in inventing something that has never been done before, be it a certification, legislation, action plan or an alternative to plastic items.

I've been impressed by the capacity of citizens and NGOs in organising themselves to counterbalance the shocking lack of consistent policies on plastic pollution.

I've been shaken by the situation in Southern Mediterranean regions.

I've been comforted by the way young Mediterraneans are pushing boundaries.

I've been reassured by the way this project has put collaboration at its core while communicating with existing Mediterranean initiatives.

Finally, I am happy to be writing these final lines with the conviction that collaboration, imagination, empathy and integrity are the key ingredients for change.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Hervean Genu". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.



The BeMed-Islands Community: a joint way forward!

The capitalisation process supported by BeMed through the CapiMed project has proven to be successful in different areas, particularly through increasing the exposure of single projects and as a community, facilitating discussions between project beneficiaries, fostering networking for new cooperation and projects, and taking experience into account in policy-making processes.

BeMed has faith that this capitalisation process will have greater impact at basin level. Although the capitalisation project in its current iteration is coming to an end, joint efforts will continue, with BeMed and project beneficiaries actively pursuing the common goal of plastic-free islands, on land and at sea.

Many options lie ahead for strengthening the community:

- Keep promoting specific project outputs, as well as this magazine, for other NGOs, public administrations and the private sector. Both MedWaves and SMILO will do so for island-related events (e.g. the SMILO event on the circular economy on small Mediterranean islands in November 2022, MARLICE-Islands in Tenerife, March 2023).
- Continue working and growing as a community, to the best possible extent within the forthcoming BeMed Community of Practice, but also by establishing partnerships and links with related initiatives.
- Consolidate the relation with key stakeholders, particularly the private sector and public administrations. This may result in better uptake of project outputs and additional opportunities to continue or upscale the work.
- Scale-up or transfer the initiatives to other regions/countries through partnerships, something the majority of BeMed project beneficiaries are very keen to do next.
- Participate in policy-making, from local to global level, to make sure the specificities of different islands are accommodated, using different tools, such as advocacy campaigns, public hearings, position papers, etc. This can be done as a community effort, as with the policy brief at the Barcelona Convention COP 22.

**MedWaves, the UNEP/MAP Regional
Activity Centre for SCP**

UN Environment Programme / Mediterranean
Action Plan (UNEP/MAP)

Convention for the Protection of the Marine
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