



CO2 PACMAN

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Deliverable 3.3 Flagship initiative statements: evaluation report

Insights from Testimonials and Stakeholder
Engagement across Mediterranean Pilot
Islands

<https://co2pacman.interreg-euro-med.eu/>



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Table of contents

Abbreviations.....	4
1. Executive summary	5
2. Methodology for Feedback and evaluation	6
2.1. Evaluation Framework.....	6
2.2. Data Sources - Tools and Feedback Collection Materials	6
3. Stakeholders engaged in planning processes	10
3.1. Public Authorities' Role	10
3.2. Key Contributors in Local Initiatives	14
3.3. Outcomes and Lessons Learned	17
4. Reinforcing CO2 PACMAN's work	18
4.1. Communication Channels and Dissemination Strategies.....	18
4.2. Visibility and engagement reinforcement	25
4.3. Citizen Perceptions on Climate Neutrality in the three Pilot Islands.....	26
5. The Testimonials.....	29
5.1. Storytelling Approach.....	29
5.2. Collected Testimonials and Emerging Messages	30
5.2.1. <i>Kick-off Meeting: establishing a shared vision</i>	30
5.2.2. <i>Rooting Labs: institutional commitment, local challenges and territorial learning</i>	30
5.2.3. <i>Valencia Business Forum: innovation, alliances and practical implementation</i>	37
5.2.4. <i>The Island I Would Like Labs: youth, citizens and future visions</i>	38
6. Conclusions	47
7. Annexes.....	49
Annex I: Digital Platforms and Online Resources.....	49
Tables and figures.....	51
List of figures.....	51
List of tables.....	51

Abbreviations

AF	Application Form
Pas	Public Authorities
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
VR	Virtual Reality
PACMAN	CO2 PACMAN Project
CO2	Carbon Dioxide
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
O2.1	Output 2.1 Multilevel Cooperation Map
O1.1	Output 1.1 Toolkit for the Development of Climate Neutrality Scenarios
SH	Stakeholders
WP	Work Package
RE	Renewable Energy

1.Executive summary

This deliverable provides the Flagship Initiatives' statements and includes all the testimonials gathered during these initiatives. It is carried out in the context of WP3 Activities of CO2 PACMAN project. It analyses the outcome and evaluates the overall knowledge gained from the audiences that were active and present in the participatory activities implemented in the three Mediterranean island territories (Brač (Croatia), Crete (Greece), and Elba (Italy)). It validates the project's ambition to transform Mediterranean islands into "testing laboratories" by consolidating the "real stories" and statements of the locals.

The activities that provided the testimonials, were among others, the Rooting Labs, The Island I would Like Labs, Youth Think Tanks, Open Innovation Collaborative Action, and the Valencia Business Forum. These actions contributed to a structured co-creation process that allowed the involvement of representatives from various stakeholders' categories (public administration officials, citizens, researchers, students, and members of the private sector) in solving problems related to climate mitigation and adaptation and carbon neutrality. Testimonials were collected throughout the whole project duration. Feedback provided by the project stakeholders was also collected. Their assessment was carried out in accordance with a specific guide, "Testimonials and Storytelling Guidelines".

CO2 PACMAN improved multi-level governance by creating a cooperative environment in which public authorities and stakeholders contributed to the efforts of transition towards climate neutrality. Participatory processes positively affected awareness, improved mutual trust, and facilitated co-design of the local solutions for climate neutrality.

The most significant project result was the development of tools and methods, consolidated in a "CO2 PACMAN Toolkit" (see Output 1.1 - Toolkit for the development of climate neutrality scenarios), which can facilitate the transferability of CO2 PACMAN results. This tool allows transferring results to other Mediterranean islands, coastal areas or even urban areas.

2. Methodology for Feedback and evaluation

The evaluation methodology of Deliverable 3.3.1 was designed to capture the insights and general impact of the CO2 PACMAN project's participatory activities. The deliverable focuses on "Flagship Initiative Statements". It examines how project activities were experienced, understood, and interpreted by the actors involved. Feedback collection was important for the evaluation process. Rooting Labs, The I Would Like Labs, Youth Think Tank activities, Open Innovation Collaborative Action, Valencia Business Forum, communication outputs, and testimonials all constitute evidence sources for understanding the effectiveness, relevance, and transferability of the project.

2.1. Evaluation Framework

The evaluation methodology chosen for this deliverable is qualitative and evidence based. The objective is to collect the most important contributions from the CO2 PACMAN Flagship activities. These activities enhance the process of developing climate neutrality plans in the Mediterranean islands and coastal regions. Specific focus is given to stakeholder involvement, institutional learning, communication actions, and their transferability potential. Many of the most important effects produced by the CO2 PACMAN project cannot be quantified; they include increased awareness, cooperation, dialogue between institutions and communities, and the establishment of narratives on climate neutrality.

The evaluation is conducted within the scope of four principal analytical dimensions:

1. Relevance.
2. Participation and inclusiveness.
3. Learning and capacity building.
4. Transferability and future uptake.

2.2. Data Sources - Tools and Feedback Collection Materials

A significant part of the deliverable is the collection and analysis of testimonials based on the Testimonials and Storytelling Guidelines document. Testimonials cover perspectives of different types of stakeholders including public authorities, policymakers, researchers, technical experts, entrepreneurs, students, and citizens. They present not only results but also experiences, collaborations, learning processes, and transformations that

occurred as a project result. D.3.3.1 exploits a broad and diverse set of data collected across the entire life of the project.

A large share of the evidence comes directly from the participatory activities carried out during the project.

The “Rooting Labs” in Brač, Crete, and Elba were important milestones. These labs gathered public authorities, technical experts, stakeholders, and citizens, encouraging them to exchange views, engage in dialogue, and work together on shared solutions, setting the pace for the project’s future work (next 30 months). Through workshops, scenario-building exercises, and group discussions, participants identified local challenges, tested ideas, and shaped responses that reflected their specific territorial contexts.

[Learn More about Rooting Labs](#)

The process continued and expanded over the project lifetime through the **“The Island I Would Like” Living Labs**. In these labs (after a year) participants were more capable after a whole year of structured activities, workshops and exchanges carried out through the CO2 PACMAN Toolkit. They were invited to imagine future scenarios, discuss climate-neutral possibilities, and translate ideas into concrete development pathways. They actively participated in the creation of climate neutrality strategies through collaboration and collective engagement.

It is crucial to mention the use of various workshop formats and events related to “Rooting Labs” and “Island I Would Like” Living Labs. Feedback was generated during structured discussions, exercise-based activities, building scenarios, and analyses. Testimonials were collected during events, interviews, video-recordings, podcasts and other kinds of sources. They involved diverse actors including public authorities, policymakers, researchers, entrepreneurs, students, and citizens.

[Learn More about Island I Would Labs](#)

An additional source of information includes the **Youth Think Tank** activities that allowed the involvement of students and young people into discussions related to sustainability and climate transition. Through such discussions, the youth shared their perspective and expectations.

In the Youth Think Tank, students and young participants joined workshops and group discussions where they explored different climate scenarios and exchanged their views. Through these interactions, they expressed concerns, raised questions, and reflected on sustainability challenges from their own

perspective. Their input helped highlight how younger generations understand these issues and what they expect in terms of future actions.

[Learn More about Youth Think Tank](#)

Another source of knowledge is provided by the **Open Innovation Collaborative Action**. As part of this process, “challenges” detected on the pilot islands were matched with selected “solutions” deriving from third-party participants including SMEs, startups, and/or research organizations. As a result, both sides provided feedback and evaluated solutions that could be applied in practice.

[Learn more about open innovation collaborative Action](#)

The Action followed a more structured path but still relied heavily on interaction. Local actors first outlined the challenges they face in their territories. External participants then worked on possible solutions and submitted their proposals. These were later reviewed and discussed with stakeholders, who considered how realistic and applicable they might be. The role of the **Valencia Business Forum** was to facilitate this process even further by enabling real interaction among challengers and solvers. This exchange helped clarify what could realistically be implemented and under which conditions.

Narrative materials include **vox populi interviews**, video statements, and other materials obtained during events organized. They provided a more immediate way of collecting feedback during the project. At different events, participants were approached and asked to share their impressions in a quick and informal way. Many responded by describing what they had just experienced, pointing out what they found useful, or commenting on specific aspects of the activities. This made it possible to capture reactions as they happened, adding a more personal and less filtered layer to the current report.

Moreover, the current Deliverable uses a wide set of official project documents and technical outputs to better understand how the project moves forward and what it produces. **The CO2 PACMAN Toolkit** explains the methods that the project develops and shows how different actors put them into practice, while the **Multilevel Cooperation Map** follows how stakeholders connect and interact.

The project’s digital platforms keep documenting the process as it happens.

The **official website** and the **Open Innovation Collaborative Platform** present challenges, showcase solutions, and display how stakeholders interact. Structured citizen engagement tools provided valuable input.

The **“AskyourcitizenonCaN” platform** (Ask Your Citizen On Climate Neutrality) actively reached out to people, asked for their views, captured their attitudes, and recorded their expectations through a standardized questionnaire. People were asked to share their views, talk about their level of awareness, and reflect on what climate neutrality means for them in practice. The same questionnaire was used across the three pilot islands, which made it easier to compare responses. 549 face-to-face interviews gathered concrete insights into how people think, behave, and respond to climate issues. Visual leaflets then organized this information and helped the comparison of results across different territories. Leaflets helped to make the results easier to read and compare, especially when looking at differences between islands or identifying common trends. This step added something important: it assisted the citizen’s perception analysis by grounding it in data that could be measured and compared.

Digital and interactive tools supported this process throughout. Tools such as virtual reality and 3D visualization allowed participants to explore different scenarios in a more concrete way. Instead of only discussing abstract ideas, they could see and react to possible changes. This often led to more focused discussions. At the same time, digital platforms made it easier to keep the exchange going, as participants could continue to share input and follow developments beyond the events themselves.

At the same time, the evaluation didn’t focus only on direct feedback. It also looked at how the project reached audiences and how they responded to it. Activity on social media, the distribution of newsletters, and participation in events all gave useful insights.

3. Stakeholders engaged in planning processes

Various stakeholders were mobilized in the three pilot territories.

3.1. Public Authorities' Role

Public authorities' (PAs) participation as institutional actors was a main target of CO2 PACMAN project. They need to participate in the process and the dialogue, to be more familiar with the pathways need to be followed and more ready to embed them within their local planning and institutional framework. PAs participated actively in the process of planning, decision-making, and future implementation: they acted as co-designers, coordinators, facilitators, and integrators of project activities. The role of public authorities in the CO2 PACMAN project was multiple.

From the first stages of CO2 PACMAN project implementation, the importance of applying a multilevel governance approach for facilitating and managing a sustainable transition towards climate neutrality has become evident:

- Kick-Off Meeting, Siena, March 2024: The meeting played a crucial role as the starting point in defining a common vision between partners and institutional actors, which, in its turn, served as a foundation for building a collaborative relationship. Due to the involvement of public authorities at the early stages of the project, they became active participants rather than passive observers.
- Throughout the development of the project, public authorities were involved in quite complex processes related to the design, testing, and validation of its solutions. Namely, "Rooting Labs", "The Island I Would Like" Labs, "Youth Think Tanks Initiatives", "Open Innovation Collaborative Action", and the Business Forum of Valencia, have been all supported by public authorities.

The actions performed by public authorities were not isolated actions since they took place in an ecosystem that included multiple kinds of stakeholders, such as small enterprises, utility companies, research institutions, and citizens. From a strategic perspective, institutional actors helped to prioritize issues, as well as ensured that all project activities were relevant with the established frameworks of policies and guidelines. Municipalities and regional authorities also served as intermediaries between specialists and the rest of the participants. To simplify complex

outputs such as greenhouse gas inventories and decarbonization scenarios, the project used different tools, such as digital platforms, participatory surveys, VR applications etc. It was vital to position project results into relevant policy discussions. The active involvement of PAs, in all the three insular areas, led to paths on how to accomplish that. An overview of the public authorities engaged throughout the Rooting Labs and “Island I Would Like” Living Labs across the three pilot islands is presented in Table 1.

It is important to note that the engagement of public authorities was not limited to isolated events. In several cases, the same authorities participated in both the Rooting Labs and the subsequent “Island I Would Like” Living Labs, demonstrating continuity of involvement and sustained institutional interest in the CO2 PACMAN process. For this reason, Table 1 should be read as a cumulative overview of public authority engagement across the project’s participatory activities. Public authorities marked with an asterisk (*) are those that participated in both rounds of labs in the respective pilot island.

Table 1 Cumulative overview of public authorities engaged across the Rooting Labs and "Island I Would Like" Living Labs in the three pilot islands

Public Authorities	Crete island		Elba island		Brač island	
	2 nd rooting Lab	3 rd Island I Would Like lab	3 rd rooting Lab	2 nd Island I Would Like lab	1 st rooting Lab	1 st Island I Would Like lab
Local public authority	Municipality of Rethymno*	Municipality of Platanias	Marciana Municipality*	Municipality of Portoferraio	City of Solin*	Municipality of Sandanski
	Municipality of Anogeia*	Municipality of Chalki	Capoliveri Municipality*		City of Supetar*	Municipality of Järva
	Municipality of Amari*	Municipal Port Authority			Municipality of Bol	Municipality of Fano
					Municipality of Sutivan*	Municipality of Murska Sobota
					Municipality of Nerežišća*	Municipality of Valongo
						City of Livno
	Municipality of Glabušovce					
Regional public authority	Region of Crete*	Union of Cretan Municipalities (represents all 24 municipalities in Crete)	Superintendence Province of Livorno*		Public Institution "RERA"*	
	Rethymno Regional Unit*	Development Agency of Crete	ARRR*		Split-Dalmatia County*	
	Managing Authority of the Region of Crete*		Tuscany Region*			
	Special					

	Management Service of the "Crete" Programme*					
	Regional Director of Education of Crete*					
National public authority		Technical Chamber of Greece (state advisory body)	Council of Ministers Italy*	Ministero per la Protezione Civile e le Politiche del Mare	Ministry of Regional Development and EU funds*	
		Organization for the Development of Crete	ANCI Tuscany*			

Note: *Public authorities marked with an asterisk (*) participated in both the Rooting Lab and the “Island I Would Like” Lab of the respective pilot island, demonstrating continuity of engagement, sustained institutional interest and commitment to the CO2 PACMAN participatory process.*

3.2. Key Contributors in Local Initiatives

Horizontal coordination between various stakeholders was also important. More specifically, it was essential for the project partners to collaborate with representatives of environmental agencies, transport agencies, tourism organizations, energy institutions, civil protection institutions, and urban planning institutions. This helped to overcome fragmentation of decision-making related to climate change adaptation/mitigation and carbon neutrality.



Figure 1 1st Rooting Lab Brač

Cooperation in Brač proved effective since actors focused on practical decisions and stayed in close contact after the first Rooting Lab. Municipalities such as Supetar, Sutivan, Bol, and Nerežišća worked together with the City of Solin and project partner, Split-Dalmatia County, forming a network that responded to their ongoing needs. Regional departments dealing with environment, infrastructure, tourism, and transport took part actively and worked together with the support of organizations like RERA and the Institute for Physical Planning. The Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds connected these efforts with the national level efforts and ensured alignment with the country's broader priorities. Discussions focused on real issues. Participants addressed water management, overall infrastructure development, and emergency situations (fire, floods etc.), which kept planning as grounded and realistic as possible. As cooperation continued, participants improved coordination and started to think in a more structured way.

In Crete, actors, across different administrative levels, managed to collaborate constructively. The project partner, TUC-RESEL, with strong support from its associated partner the Municipality of Rethymno, brought together departments working on environment, climate change, urban planning, tourism, and digital services, allowing them to coordinate their actions more effectively. The Region of Crete and its directorates joined this process. Educational institutions also contributed by building knowledge, supporting future activities and strengthening long-term capacity.



Figure 2 2nd Rooting Lab Crete



Figure 3 3rd rooting Lab Elba

In Elba, the University of Siena and the University of Florence collaborated with the regional and local authorities. Municipalities such as Portoferraio, Marciana, and Capoliveri worked with the Tuscany Region, agencies like ARRR, and networks such as ANCI Tuscany. National institutions supported this process by linking local actions with wider policy frameworks. Business stakeholders, especially from the tourism sector, joined the process and contributed actively in the “climate dialogue”. Organizations such as Associazione Albergatori and Confcommercio Elba helped the integration of economic perspectives into real planning. The involvement of several municipalities required continuous coordination. Despite these challenges, participants developed a shared, common vision.

3.3. Outcomes and Lessons Learned

Important improvements were achieved. **The process of local planning and decision-making was improved.** An important improvement was also the **establishment of strong connections** between PAs and members of the local quadruple helix. This connection empowered the citizens' participation in various initiatives, which, in turn, made them become interested in the process of climate transition.

The CO2PACMAN Toolkit (instruments and innovative technologies introduced) tested new procedures for planning and decision-making and became more “mature” to be tested elsewhere.

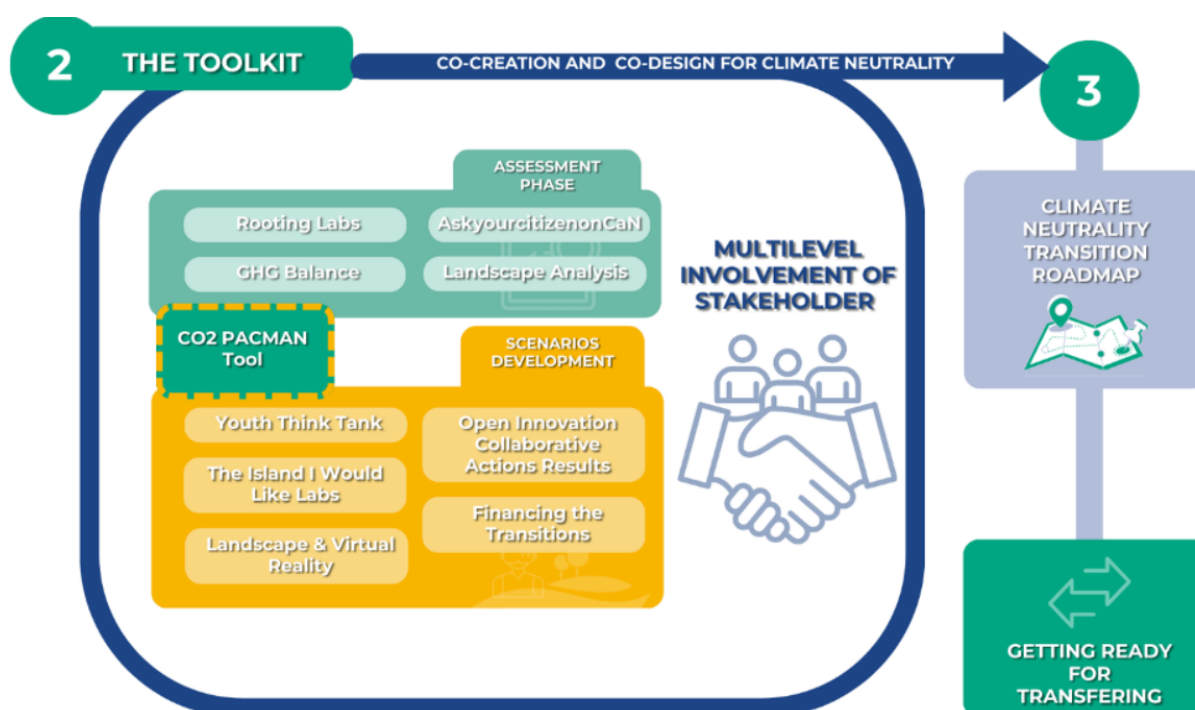


Figure 4 CO2 PACMAN Toolkit

The main lesson learned is that public authorities should plan their climate transition activities in the long term, stay committed to them, and continue incorporating participatory approaches into decision-making and planning processes.

4. Reinforcing CO2 PACMAN's work

The replication of the CO2 PACMAN project results relies heavily on their comprehensiveness. In fact, the topics tackled in the framework of the project such as climate neutrality, greenhouse gas balances, decarbonisation scenarios, participatory governance, open innovation, citizen participation and territorial transitions, suggest that communication must take place through a variety of channels and through different set of messages. Different language must be used to reach public authorities, citizens, students, SMEs, researchers, innovators or civil society organizations. Communication served participation, transmission of messages, awareness raising and capitalization. Websites, social media, newsletters, press releases, videos, podcasts, interviews, digital platforms and storytelling, were used. The project succeeded in presenting its results in a comprehensive way to multiple receivers.

The communication strategy was based on institutional communication in balance with a more accessible language. Institutional news, official policy messages and technical outputs have been spread via institutional channels, whereas testimonies, Vox Populi videos, interviews, podcasts and social media posts helped to communicate the main aspects of the CO2 PACMAN project. **In this way, it was possible not to present CO2 PACMAN only as a purely technical project, in the three islands, but rather as a “common transformation journey”.**

4.1. Communication Channels and Dissemination Strategies

CO2 PACMAN adopted a multi-channel approach to communication and dissemination encompassing a visual identity, digital platforms, institutional communication, newsletters, press releases, audiovisual material, social media outreach, podcast content, and event-based communication. **Different channels enabled project teams to reach out to various target audiences while adjusting language depending on specific audience needs.**

The official **CO2 PACMAN project website** provided information on the project objectives, the partners, the activities, various news, events, outputs, and achievements. (<https://co2pacman.interreg-euro-med.eu/>). As the main institutional information hub, the website served as a reference platform for stakeholders, policy actors, researchers, and members of the wider public interested in CO2 PACMAN and climate-neutrality of the Mediterranean islands.

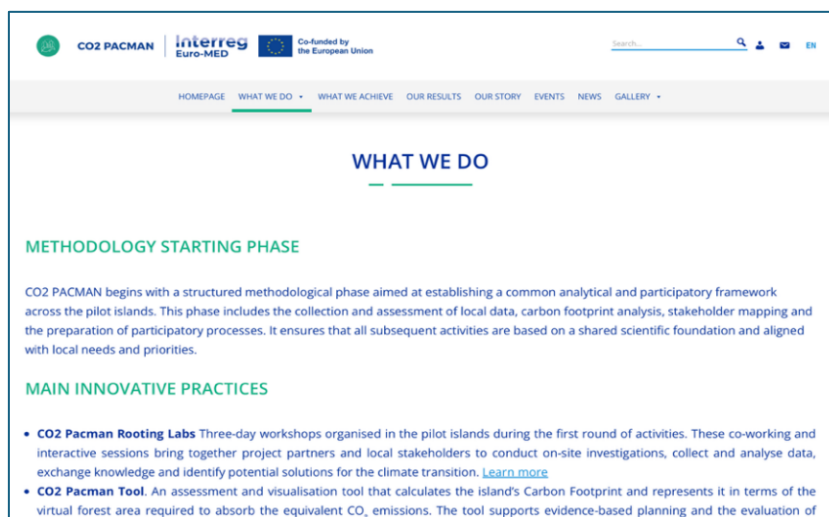


Figure 5 CO2 PACMAN Official website

Additionally, social media became a vital part of the project dissemination strategy. Four social media channels were created, each serving a unique communication objective:

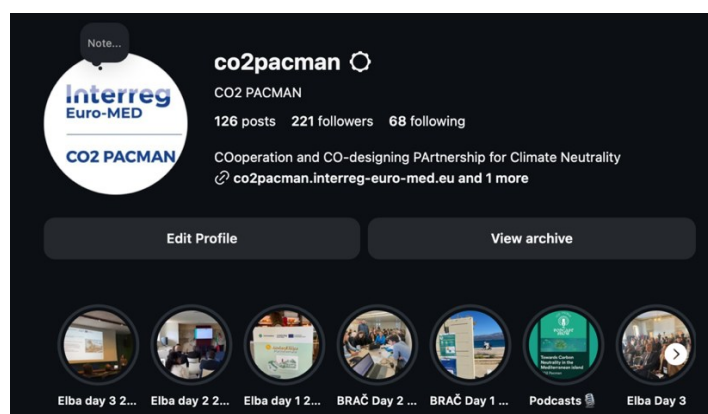


Figure 6 CO2 PACMAN Instagram

LinkedIn served professional institutional and policy-based communication, **Facebook and Instagram** were used to connect to citizens and local communities through visual and accessible formats of dissemination.

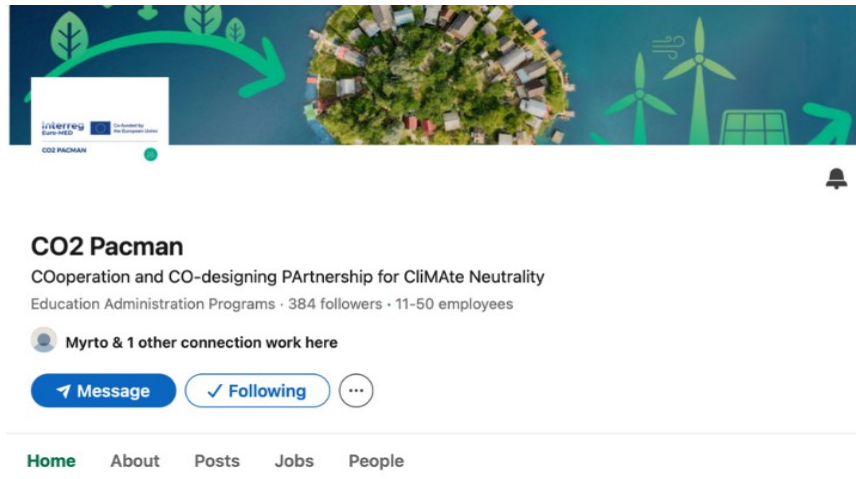


Figure 7 CO2 PACMAN LinkedIn

YouTube channel served as an audiovisual resource hosting interviews, event recordings, Vox Populi clips, partner testimonials and other types of project content. An important aspect of communication was associated with collecting and sharing testimonies via audiovisual means. Interviews, Vox Populi videos, general interviews and video recording served as a tool to disseminate testimonials, bringing to life the essence of project and providing a better understanding of climate-neutrality ideas.

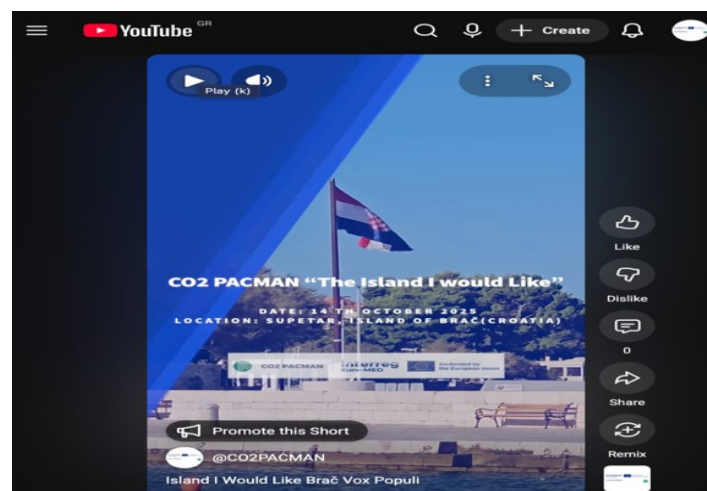


Figure 8 CO2 PACMAN YouTube Channel

Podcast content shared on [Spotify](#) became another type of communication channel of the project.

Through podcast format, the project achieved broader dissemination of reflections on sustainability and climate neutrality, addressing territorial challenges, and project experiences. The format served as an opportunity to share information beyond traditional reports, technical documents, and institutional communication.



Figure 9 CO2 PACMAN Spotify



Figure 10 CO2 PACMAN Podcast Series

Another valuable tool of dissemination was the use of three **newsletters**. They served as regular reports on project achievements, key events, results and future plans of the project, providing a steady flow of project communication to keep interested parties informed about project evolution.

Press releases conveyed information on key project events and developments. They provided structured narratives of project events like

Labs held in Brač, Crete, and Elba, Valencia Business Forum, policy events, activities of the Youth Think Tank etc. Through press distribution, the project reached a broad audience.

Project communication was closely related to project events like Rooting Labs, Living Labs, Youth Think Tanks, Open Innovation and Business Forum. Events became an important source of dissemination, as they were accompanied by posters, save-the-date notices, invitations, templates, visuals, press releases, and social media posts, allowing not only to promote, but also mobilize interested stakeholders for events participation.

The project digital platforms created throughout the project duration, served as beacons of “knowledge”.

The **Mediterranean Open Innovation Hub**, helped implement the process of open innovation (<https://openinnovationcolab.com>), by connecting local challenges to external innovative actors like innovators, SMEs, startups and other research organizations interested in solving these challenges.

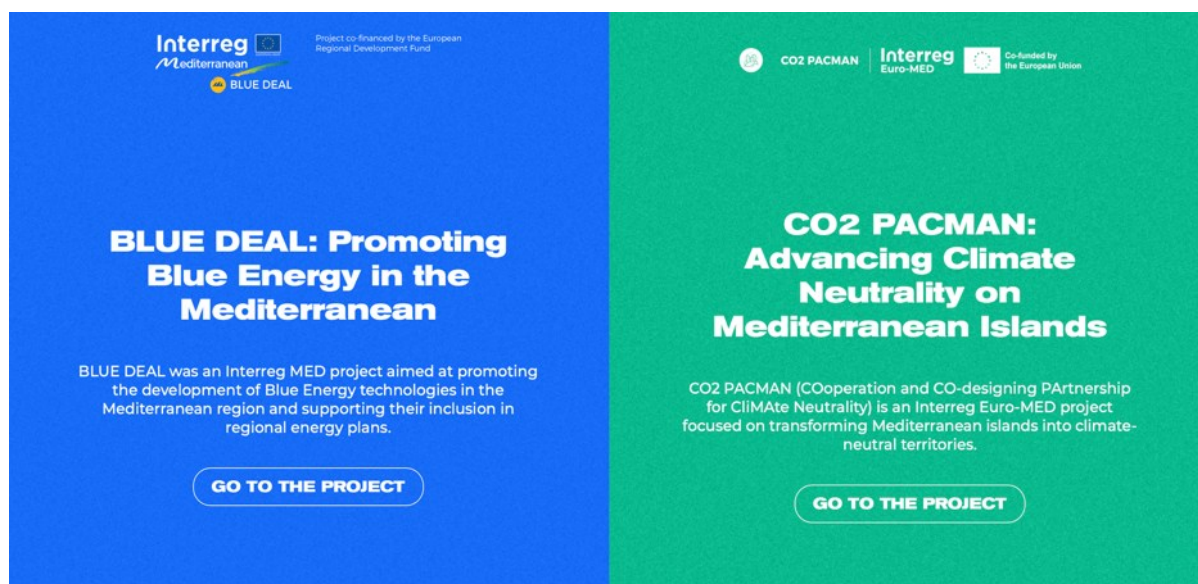


Figure 11 Mediterranean Open Innovation Hub Platform

The second Platform (<https://www.innovationcolab.eu>), the **Open Innovation Collaborative Action**, hosted the Open Innovation Catalogue and challenges linked to CO2 PACMAN and collaborative innovations helped in structuring and communicating the information on local needs, innovation opportunities, and proposed solutions. It was an efficient way to transform territorial challenges into collaborative innovation opportunities.

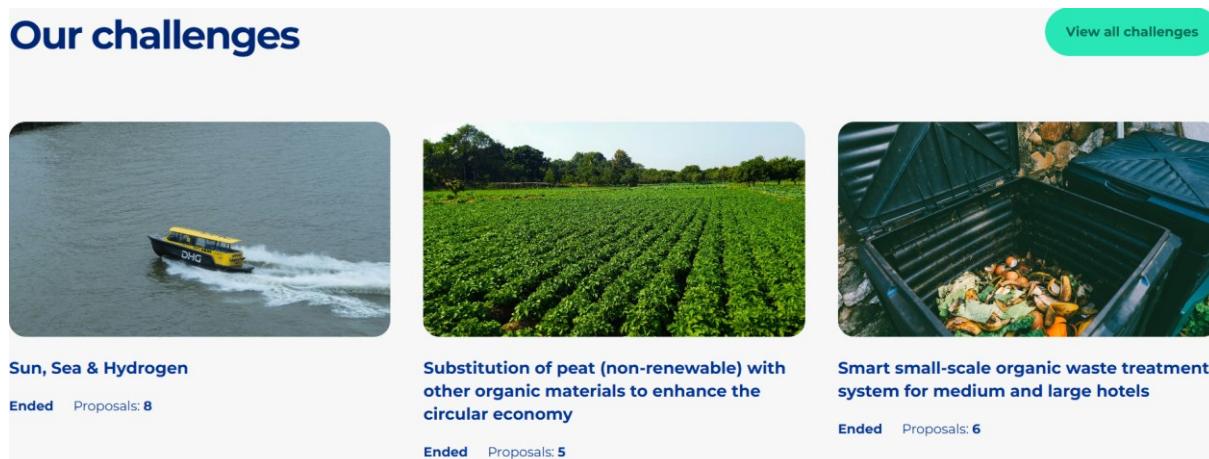


Figure 12 Open Innovation Collaborative Action platform

The **CO2 PACMAN interactive platform** (<https://www.co2pacman.eu>) helped to disseminate and improve the project's visibility as well as access to information and related resources and tools.

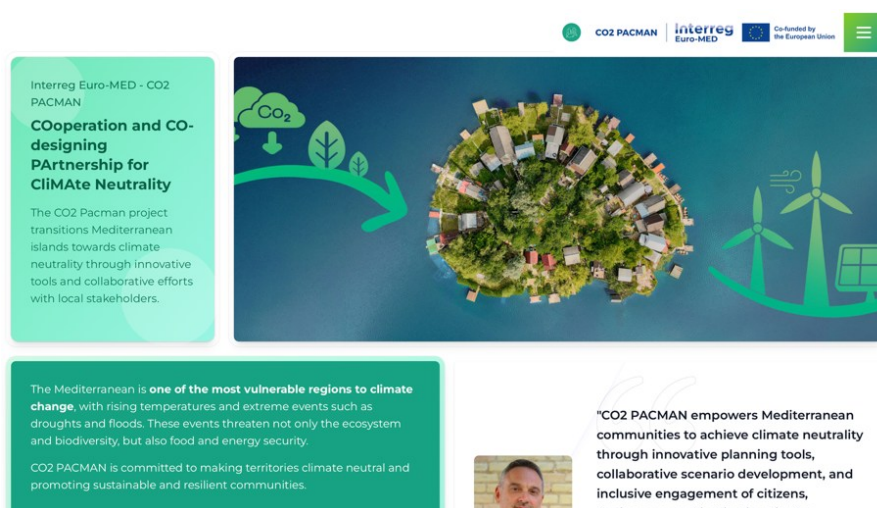


Figure 13 CO2 PACMAN interactive platform

It contained **one of the most important project Tool (CO2 PACMAN Tool)** where we can visualize the GHG emissions and their main contributors (industry, transport, tourism, energy etc.) within a territory.



Figure 14 CO2 PACMAN Tool

The **CO2 PACMAN interactive Stakeholder map** also served as an important tool for result dissemination and transfer of achievements. The Map highlighted the stakeholders, participating in Rooting Labs, Youth Think Tanks, The Island I Would Like Labs, Open Innovation activities, Valencia Business Forum, and other project events and the connections of these stakeholders.

The three project platforms, together with the project website, and the Interactive stakeholder Map, enhanced the overall digital visibility of CO2 PACMAN and facilitated its results' dissemination beyond project partnership. (Output 2.1)

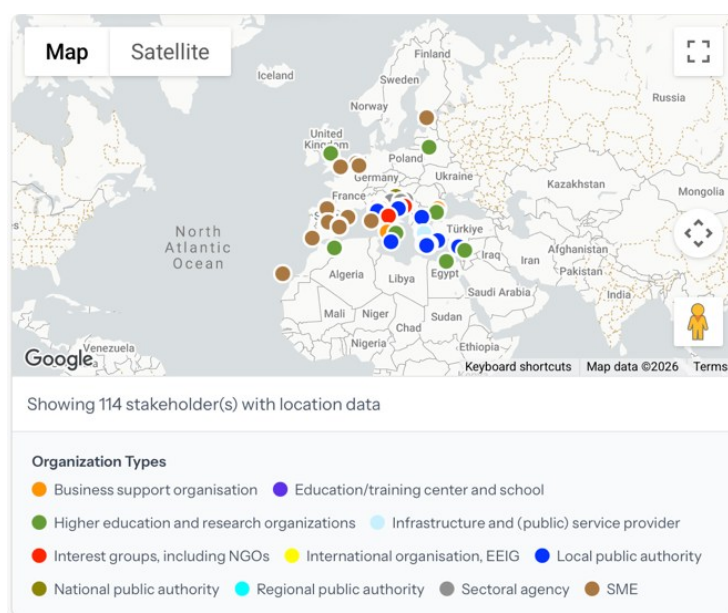


Figure 15 CO2 PACMAN interactive Stakeholder map

4.2. Visibility and engagement reinforcement

CO2 PACMAN communication and dissemination activities resulted in some valuable outcomes in terms of visibility, engagement, awareness, stakeholder communication, and transfer potential. Overall, communication helped increase the recognizability and understanding of the project in different countries and territories.

CO2 PACMAN is unique in terms of its approach to citizen engagement in the project actions. The 'AskyourcitizenonCaN' platform and the survey process conducted within it allowed the collection of citizens' opinions, expectations, and perceptions in relation to climate neutrality on the pilot islands. **Overall, 549 face-to-face interviews were carried out.**



549	3
RESPONDENTS	LOCATIONS

Figure 16 AskyourcitizenonCaN

The audiovisual materials produced within CO2 PACMAN have resulted in significant outcomes. Through written testimonials, Vox Populi videos, YouTube interviews, general video interviews, Spotify podcasts, CO2 PACMAN became visible in public authorities, citizens, students, researchers, entrepreneurs, innovators, and other community members. During the fourth reporting period, from 1/7/2025 to 31/12/2025 CO2 PACMAN reached about **32,600 Facebook views, 25,129 LinkedIn impressions, 74,911 Instagram views, and 1,500 YouTube views, which corresponds to 56.8 hours of watch time.**

4.3. Citizen Perceptions on Climate Neutrality in the three Pilot Islands

The citizen survey showed a very inspiring result: more than 70% of the respondents claimed that they are ready to launch various actions that could lead decarbonization and climate neutrality in their islands. CO2 PACMAN had a strong capacity building and awareness potential.

It demonstrated that local communities cannot be excluded from decision making procedures and when they participate actively, important transitions that might seem otherwise impossible, can move in a smooth manner.

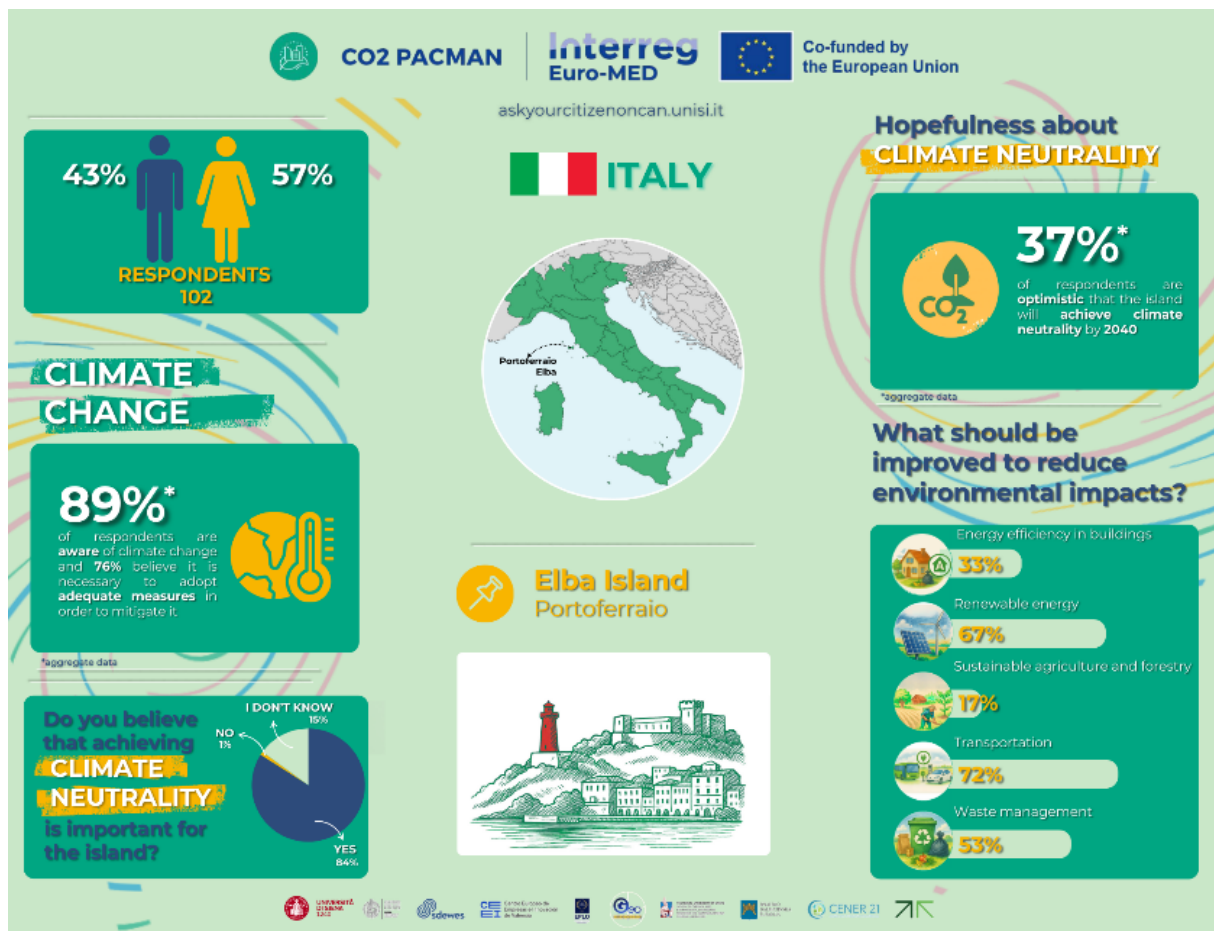


Figure 17 AskyourcitizenonCaN Results in Elba Island

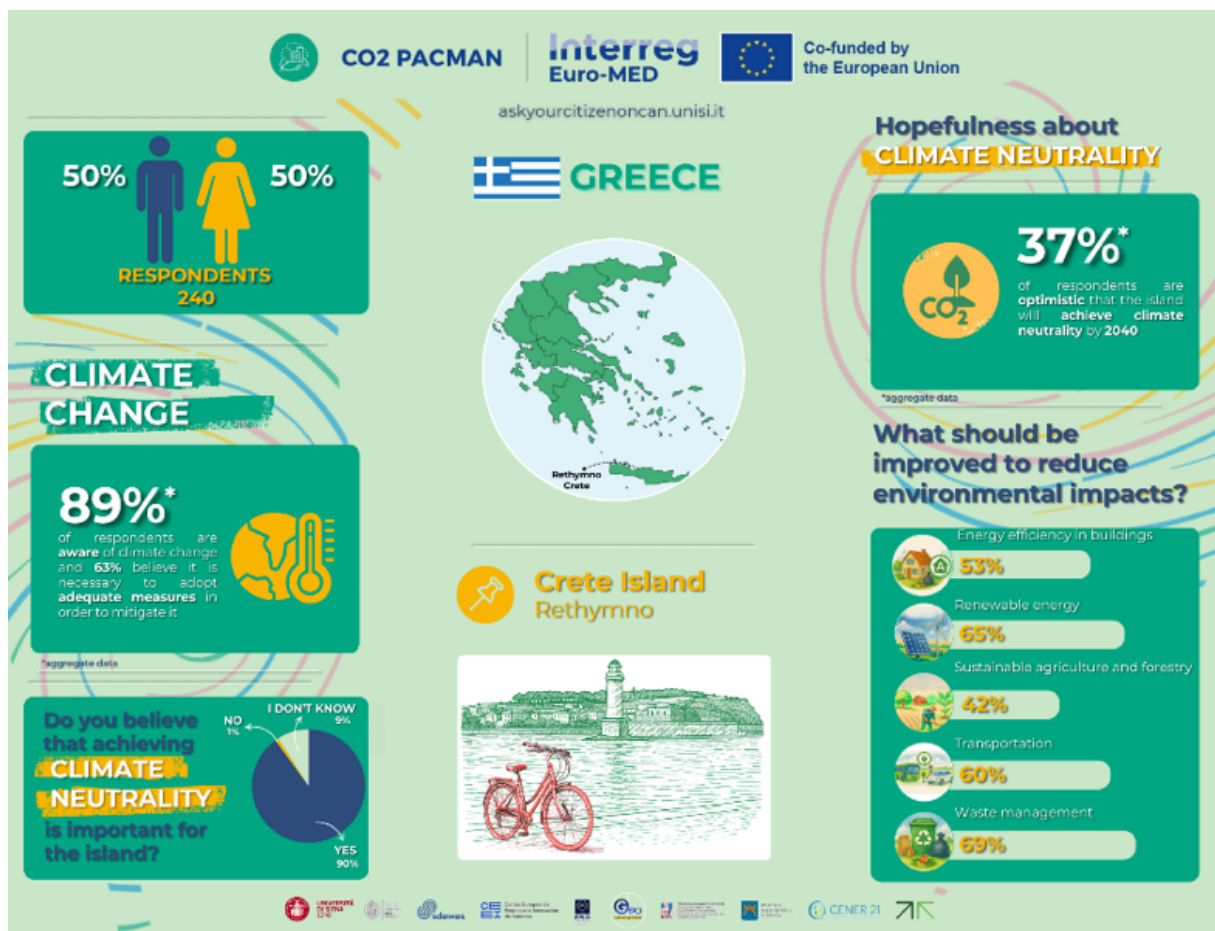


Figure 19 AskyourcitizenonCaN Results in Crete Island

5. The Testimonials

CO2 PACMAN generated a wide collection of stories, reflections, testimonials, interviews, and personal statements from the people directly involved in its activities. These voices represent an essential part of the evaluation process because they reveal how the project was experienced by public authorities, researchers, businesses, students, citizens, innovation actors, and community representatives across the Mediterranean pilot islands.

Whereas outputs like greenhouse gas balances, climate-neutrality scenarios, digital tools, stakeholder maps, and innovation solutions act as proof of the success of the project in terms of analysis and operation, the stories gathered can be considered proof of its social and cultural impact. The voices collected through written testimonials, Vox Populi interviews, YouTube interviews, general video interviews, Spotify podcast content, short videos, and event reflections, provide qualitative evidence of how CO2 PACMAN influenced perceptions, relationships, expectations, and readiness for change. They help translate the project's technical results into real experiences.

5.1. Storytelling Approach

The storytelling technique used in the context of CO2 PACMAN aims to depict authentic voices and life stories emerging out of CO2 PACMAN participatory activities.

Testimonial collection and storytelling were conducted according to the Guidelines for Testimonials and Storytelling, which served as a common methodology for obtaining quotes, interviews, and other testimonials from project partners, public authorities, stakeholders, citizens, students, business representatives, researchers, and local communities. Emphasis was placed on the authenticity and clarity of testimonials. One specific feature of CO2 PACMAN storytelling technique lies in the diversity of its testimonial sources. Not just written testimonies, but various testimonial formats (written statements, recorded interviews, Vox Populi videos, general interviews, short testimonials, reflection videos, and audio content like a podcast) were produced.

In particular, the audiovisual dimension played a significant role in collecting testimonies. Interviews and Vox Populi videos published in CO2 PACMAN YouTube channels and social networks helped in collecting immediate

reaction to project activities. In addition to video testimonies, there was also audio communication using podcasts published on the Spotify platform. This audio content simplified and reinforced the discussion of issues of sustainability, climate neutrality, territorial specifics, and CO2 PACMAN experience.

Testimonies and stories are tightly related to the timeline of CO2 PACMAN activities. At the kick-off meeting, the project vision was shared. At the Rooting Labs stage, we gathered insights from institutions, technology, and local communities' members, from Brač, Crete, and Elba islands. During the Valencia Business Forum, the voice of innovative solvers, investors, and entrepreneurs, was added. At "The Island I would like Labs", after a year of intense project actions, audiences were more mature to express their views and in combination with the Youth Think Tank, we collected the opinions of citizens, students, and local community members.

Testimonies contribute to the legacy of CO2 PACMAN. Preserving testimonies in written, audiovisual, and audio formats will ensure a continuity of the participatory process after the project activities' end. They can prove that climate neutrality on Mediterranean Islands is much more than policy-making and technical solutions since it involves many actors and citizens as well.

5.2. Collected Testimonials and Emerging Messages

The testimonies themselves progress alongside the evolution of the project. The collection begins with the shared vision formulated during the Kick-off Meeting, continues with the Rooting Labs conducted in the pilot regions, is extended by the process of Open Innovation as well as by the Valencia Business Forum, and concludes with the more community and youth-focused testimonies produced within The Island I Would Like Labs.

5.2.1. Kick-off Meeting: establishing a shared vision

The Siena Kick-off Meeting was the starting point for the CO2 PACMAN project and the construction of a common consensus for all the parties involved such as partners, institutions, stakeholders, and technical actors. Even though the richest source of testimonies was provided by the participatory activities conducted later, the importance of the Kick-off meeting setting the foundations of the project vision: **achieving carbon neutrality in islands, through innovative and participatory processes.**

5.2.2. Rooting Labs: institutional commitment, local challenges and territorial learning

The Rooting Labs generated important testimonials from public authorities, technical experts, citizens, SMEs, utilities' experts, researchers, and civil society actors. The voices collected in Brač, Crete, and Elba show how climate

neutrality was interpreted through the eyes of the locals and the specific governance framework of each island.

Brač island

In Brač, Mr. Martin Bućan, Head of the CO2 PACMAN Project at Split-Dalmatia County, emphasised that *“the workshops achieved excellent results, by engaging local stakeholders, strengthening the dialogue among municipalities of the island”*. He connected the project with the need to build long-term, bottom-up solutions for climate adaptation and carbon-emission reduction. He further highlighted that *“local administrations often think within a single budget year, while effective climate adaptation requires long-term planning and consistency”*. This reflection captures one of the most important governance lessons of the project: climate neutrality cannot be achieved through fragmented actions or short-term administrative cycles, but through continuous institutional commitment.



Figure 20 1st Rooting Lab Brač

The Brač Rooting Lab also showed the importance of connecting climate-neutrality planning with practical infrastructure needs.

Mr. Petar Anibalović, Director of Brač Waterworks, underlined the value of exchanging experiences with colleagues from Crete, Elba, and Valencia. He stated that *“exchanges of views were connected with the efforts for reduction of drinking water losses, improvement of irrigation systems, and the reinforcement of the island’s firefighting network”*. He demonstrated how climate neutrality can become meaningful when it addresses concrete insular vulnerabilities, especially water efficiency.

Mr. Nikola Martinić Dragan, Commander of the Brač Fire Department Operational Area, also stressed the importance of learning from others. He highlighted that *“workshops help local actors learn faster and more efficiently, because it is wiser to learn from mistakes of others than from our own”*, revealing the value of peer-learning among islands and the transfer potential of the CO2 PACMAN approach.

The capacity building dimension of the Brač Lab was further reinforced by

Mrs. Marija Mioč, Head of Service at the Directorate for Islands of the Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds. She underlined that *“public administration must ensure policies that improve living and working conditions on islands”*, connecting CO2 PACMAN with national policy development and integration of climate change, island specificity, and clean energy into the national legislative agenda.

Mr. Ante Guć, Project Manager at Public Institution RERA, added another aspect to this discussion by stressing that *“regional development agencies support local self-government units in implementing projects that strengthen communities”*. He also highlighted the lack of local human resources, adding that *“the development of a local strategy for the islands would be the best thing to do”*.

The representative of the International Centre for Sustainable Development of Energy, Water and Environment Systems, Mr. Tibor Bešenić, emphasized that *“the insular strategy regarding energy needs, has to be supported by a scientific basis and consider the size of the island and its inhabitants”*.

Tamara Lišnjić Lang, representing the Regional Energy and Climate Agency REGEA, described regional energy and climate agencies as bridges between research, policy, and practice. Her testimony reinforces one of the central messages of CO2 PACMAN: *“climate-neutrality transition requires intermediary actors capable of translating technical knowledge into practical governance and implementation”*.

Mrs. Carmela Gioia, Executive Manager of CO2 PACMAN at the University of Siena, reflected on the importance of financial transparency, consistency, and proactive communication among partners. Her contribution highlights that *“project governance itself is part of the transition process, as collaboration and clarity are necessary for maintaining alignment across a transnational partnership”*.

Crete island

The testimonials deriving from the Rooting Lab of Crete are rich in references to climate impacts, political leadership and public participation.

Prof. Theocharis Tsoutsos, TUC-ReSEL Director, Technical University of Crete, has put emphasis: *“Sustainability needs bottom-up approaches. In that, engagement must be deliberately enabled with the right approach, turning passive observers into active contributors, making participation accessible to all.”*

Mr. Georgios Marinakis, the Mayor of Rethymno, emphasized the significance of projects like CO2 PACMAN for their territory, where citizens already experience the adverse effects of climate change. According to him:

“such projects shall enable Crete to overcome current challenges and lead the transition towards carbon neutrality”.

Mr. Giannis Anastasakis, Deputy Governor for Climate Change and Sustainable Mobility of the Region of Crete, stated that *“technical issues could be easily solved, whereas the issue of citizens' acceptance remains a challenge”*, testifying the significance of the initial inclusion of local communities in the climate transition process.

On behalf of the University of Siena, Mr. Simone Bastianoni, CO2 PACMAN coordinator, mentioned: *“the development of local data collection, scenarios and analysis related to climate neutrality, should integrate GIS layers and implement clear steps that allow the transformation of evidence-based analysis into tangible planning knowledge”.*

Mr. Giorgos Skordilis, the Vice Mayor for Climate Change of Municipality of Rethymno, highlighted the practical aspect of the event, emphasizing *“the significance of retrofitting municipal buildings, smart mobility, and planting trees to reduce the overall consumption and carbon footprint of Crete”.*

Mr. Vasilis Theodorakis, president of the Rethymno Municipal Port Fund, added that *“port industry faces many obstacles during the energy transition and needs coordinated regulation, financing and capacity building”.* Both declarations validated CO2 PACMAN's framework of an open and realistic discussion of the ports' potential CO2 emissions' reduction.

The president of the Rethymno Hoteliers Association, Mr. Manolis Tsakalakis, testified that *“hotel business could become a driving force in green transition since green operations provide hotels with a competitive advantage”.*

Mr. Dimitris Kalaitzidakis, Group Operations Director at GRECOTEL, who emphasized *“the need of integration of tourism, food delivery services and hospitality in one climate neutral business operation”* and Mr. Kostas Paterakis, General Director of DEDISA, who underlined *“the significance of circular economy principles and waste-free operations”.* These voices showcase the increasing competitiveness of businesses, based on climate neutrality principles.

The president of the Technical Chamber of Greece-Rethymno, Mr Spyros Kalisperakis pointed out *“the significant role of engineers and technology designers, so as to create clear regulations, positive incentives and increased awareness, necessary for SMEs to implement climate-neutral solutions”.*

Mr. Minas Papadakis, CEO of Heraklion Port Authority highlighted that *“zero*

emission ports would soon become reality thanks to innovations and careful site selection”.

Mr. Vassilis Petrou, Visualization Expert at GEO – 3D Landscapes, underlined that *“the use of immersive 3D and VR technologies can increase the effectiveness of renewable-energy planning processes, making it clear that technical tools become especially effective when they are implemented for enhancing communication and participation”.*



Figure 21 2nd Rooting Lab Crete

Finally, Mrs. Stavroula Tournaki, TUC-ReSEL’s Director of Development and EU projects, and Crete’s living lab coordinator highlighted the active involvement of all Cretans in the activities designed. Mrs. Tournaki confirmed that *“Local processes were thoughtfully designed and rigorously executed to maximize active stakeholder and community engagement throughout the region, ensuring that all voices were heard and meaningfully incorporated into decision-making.”.*

Elba Island

In Elba, during the 3rd Rooting Lab and in many various other meetings in the region, numerous stakeholders shared their opinions. Elba testimonies showcased the importance of the integration of renewable energy and decarbonization pathways into spatial planning, regulations, and landscape preservation.



Figure 22 3rd Rooting Lab Elba

Mr. George Papandreou, President of the Circle the Med Forum and former Prime Minister of Greece, underlined that *"an active role of citizens, businesses, and local authorities is vital for developing efficient climate-related solutions"*. Mr. George Papandreou's statement is fully connected to the vision and goals of CO2 PACMAN.

Mr. Curzio Cervelli, the Coordinator of the Interreg Euro-MED Programme Joint Secretariat, pointed out that *"the knowledge gained through the project would become useful for local entities, such as the Municipality of Portoferraio. They could be able to get direct benefits from the results obtained"*.

Mrs. Silvia Viviani, Urban Planning Councillor of the Municipality of Livorno and former President of the National Institute of Urban Planning, argued that *"the energy transition must be socially acceptable and capable of overcoming the sectoral fragmentation of planning, in accordance with territorial characteristics"*.

Mrs. Michela Chiti, representative of the Province of Livorno and PROMOTER Project, stressed that *"European cooperation projects such as CO2 PACMAN give local administrations the possibility to share their experiences and solve environmental problems together"*.

On his part, Mr. Domenico Zaccaria, from Superintendence for the Provinces of Pisa and Livorno, stressed that *"great attention needs to be paid on the quality of proposed solutions and the promotion of cultural and technical innovations in spatial and urban planning, in cooperation with protection authorities"*.

Mr. Simone Borghesi, President of MEDAERE and Director of the Florence School of Regulation–Climate, pointed out that *"a holistic strategy is needed in regard to every stage of achieving social acceptance, addressing regional issues, coping with inequality, and mitigating climate change"*.

Mr. Attilio Piattelli, President of the FREE Coordination, indicated that *"great*

achievements are already gained in relation to renewable energy use". At the same time there are still many drawbacks in terms of industrial policies". The testimony clearly revealed some structural obstacles for the smooth transition to renewable energy sources' use, despite the existence of technological progress.

Mrs. Raffaella Bisconti, from SUN AGRI ITALIA, stated that *"when new decrees and policies are about to be developed, companies with specific expertise should be invited in the discussion (co-development of policies)".*

Mr. Antonio Melley, Director of the Marine Sector at ARPAT, pointed out that *"decarbonization plans for islands should be based on actual data and regional collaboration, and a thorough scientific needs' assessment is the key for achieving the sustainable and green energy transitions".*

The voice of civil society and environmental organizations revealed the close connection between decarbonization and landscape protection.

Mr. Umberto Mazzantini, National Head for Small Islands at Legambiente and Head of Legambiente Toscana Mare, stressed that *"ecological transition of small islands require community participation and local ownership".*

Mr. Fausto Ferruzza, Landscape Representative of Legambiente, claimed that *"the preservation of Elba landscape and biodiversity is not opposed to the process of decarbonization. It will reinforce the uniqueness of the territory".*

As for local businesses concerned, their involvement was remarkable.

Mrs. Norma Larocca, CEO of Acqua de l'Elba Foundation, linked *"the "Elba 2035" project to sustainability as the main vehicle of the island towards the preservation of its natural heritage, empowering the local community".*

Mr. Antonio Arrighi, CEO of Arrighi Winery, demonstrated how a local family business can preserve the territorial biodiversity using research and culture mix as vehicles of development.

Mrs. Claudio Della Lucia, CEO of CER Elba Est Ovest Association, underlined that *"energy communities helped people participate in the energy transition process by using renewable energy that was produced locally".*

Mr. William Caggiano, CEO of Elba Energie, emphasized that *"renewable energy brought not only the technological shift but also the energy independence of Elba Island".*

The civil society was presented by Mrs. Silvia Moroni, an important sustainability influencer, green content creator and environmental protection advocate, founder of "Parla Sostenibile". She stressed that *"all the citizens have a role to play in the decarbonization process, whereas*

participation is the real boosting force behind every transformation effort “.

Finally, Mr. Simone Bastianoni, “Mr. Simone Bastianoni, Project Coordinator and Professor at the University of Siena, responsible for the coordination of the Elba Island activities (together with the University of Florence) and Professor at the University of Siena, stated that *“CO2 PACMAN provides concrete tools for the decarbonization of islands through a process of co-creation of institutions, citizens, students, and enterprises, which ensured the social sustainability of the process”.*

5.2.3. Valencia Business Forum: innovation, alliances and practical implementation

The Valencia Business Forum led local challenges’ diagnosis to participatory planning, innovation and matchmaking. As the collected testimonials demonstrate, Open Innovation contributed to the match of territorial challenges with targeted expertise, specific knowledge, and mobilization of different market stakeholders, including potential solvers, SMEs, startups, researchers, investors, and entrepreneurs. According to the statement of

Mr. Martin Bućan, from the Split-Dalmatia County, stated that *“the event proved how Open Innovation can turn ideas into fruitful collaborations and future alliances “.*

The Forum created conditions for converting dialogue into real market action.

Mr. Simone Bastianoni, from the University of Siena, mentioned that *“only collaborative efforts and the interweaving of science, policy, and entrepreneurship can ensure a successful process when attempting to make islands climate-neutral “.*

Mr. Antonio Arrighi, from the Arrighi farm (in Elba) highlighted that *“projects like CO2 PACMAN facilitated connections between local climate adaptation/mitigation challenges with innovative and environmental-friendly solutions “.*

According to Mr. Claudio Della Lucia, from the Renewable Energy Community of Elba, *“CO2 PACMAN could serve as a tool which will allow moving from ambitious intentions to implementation by achieving tangible results, leading to local energy transformation “.*

Mr. Petar Anibalović, from Vodovod Brač, declared that *“collaboration was vital for identifying effective tools to manage water resources better; exchanging experience among islands was important too”.*

The Investors’ Roundtable revealed another important message: *“a solution could be considered investable when it was supported by governance commitment, when it is evidence-based, and has a measurable impact “.*

The Forum was described by the media as “an “open-innovation laboratory”, a catalyst for change, and a inter-regional sustainability effort, capable of transforming climate challenges into real projects “.

The voices of “solvers” also demonstrate the value of the whole process.

Mr. Zainab Bibi, Founder of RTN Zero Consulting, described “*participation in the CO2 PACMAN Open Innovation Challenge as eye-opening*” and appreciated the overall support they received.

Mr. Miki Royan, co-founder of AbonoKm0 and Wise Wase SL, explained that “*the Open Innovation process allowed him not only to present his solution, but also the whole vision behind it* “.

Dr. Hamid Reza Nasriani, Researcher and Senior Lecturer at the University of Central Lancashire, explained that his team “*studied the carbon-reduction needs of the islands and matched them with various technologies available in his portfolio* “.

Mr. Andrés Arconada, an AI and Advanced Analytics Specialist, described CO2 PACMAN as “*a rare opportunity to test AI-based optimisation solutions in a European context* “.

The “challengers” testimonies also highlight the practical relevance of the Forum.

Mr. Antonio Arrighi stated that “*climate change is already reshaping agriculture on Elba, from earlier grape ripening to more extreme weather events* “.

Mr. Claudio Della Lucia explained that more than five hundred citizens are part of the Renewable Energy Community of Elba and that their input shaped the challenge that was selected from CO2 PACMAN.

Mr. Petar Anibalović stated that Vodovod Brač launched its challenge to address island energy needs and explore how carbon emissions knowledge can be transformed into a valuable resource in the effort towards climate resilience.

Finally Mrs. Carmen Renovell, from CEEI Valencia, Organiser of the Forum, stated that “*the Valencia Business Forum became the true manifestation of applied innovation where challengers and solvers from the entire Mediterranean gathered to discuss the possibilities of transforming their climate-related concerns into collaborations* “.

5.2.4. The Island I Would Like Labs: youth, citizens and future visions

The Island I Would Like Labs moved from assessment towards scenario-building, and shared visions for sustainable islands’ futures. The declarations collected during the Brač, Elba and Crete Labs show how young people,

students, teachers, technical experts, public authorities, and citizens understood their role in climate action.

Brač Island

Professor Simone Bastianoni, from the University of Siena, emphasized several times during the Brač Lab the importance of youth participation. According to him, *“young people represent both the leaders of the future and agents of today's changes, since Earth's pollution is a common problem, while the changes needed should start from each region “*. He also stressed out that *“raising awareness at the societal level, represents a necessary step on the path to sustainability, since the educated people are capable of driving the changes needed”*.

Jakov Arnerić and Paul Šmit (students of Supetar High School for Tourism), indicate the necessity of recycling, usage of bicycles instead of cars, reduction of deforestation processes, preservation of natural resources like water, and the use of renewable energy sources such as solar energy. The Lab helped the students to transfer the idea of climate neutrality into practice.

A young girl, Dea Urlić, who is traveling daily to her school from the city of Split said that Brač Island could serve as an example of sustainable living. She added that Brač *could be used as a model of eco-tourism*. Testimonies of the pupils reflect the strong connection between young generation and their territory.

Workshop facilitators and mentors noticed that *“young people demonstrated amazing capabilities once they got the chance to communicate and cooperate out of the classroom “*. The statement proves that the Lab was successful because of the use of experiential approach to learning, i.e. inviting youth to imagine new worlds, test solutions, and create projects together.

Participants from the Youth Think Tank and the University of Split elaborated on the advantages associated with the cooperating with youth associations from other nations. The exchanges of ideas and multi-national collaboration enabled them to broaden their perspective.

The students of the Faculty of Geodesy and Geoinformatics of the University of Split shared their view and various information about the link between science and sustainability.

Mr. Alfred Dominis, engineer from the local company Vodovod Brač, expressed his willingness to have solar panels installed at his home. The initiative would be beneficial both at individual and communal levels. The project inspired the citizens of Brač Island to discuss such actions.

Mr. Gianni Betti, Professor at the University of Siena and member of the GIIT research team, stated that *“for most Europeans, climate change is an alarming issue because it threatens their health and well-being”*.



Figure 23 1st Island I Would Like Lab Brač

Mr. Martin Bućan, Organiser of the Lab and Head of the Split Dalmatia County-Department for Agriculture, Fisheries, Rural Development and EU Funds, was very satisfied with the high engagement of the citizens and young generation and enthusiastic about the active participation of students from the high schools of Supetar and Bol. They showed high interest in the project, in the virtual reality as 3D models, suggesting their own projects for sustainable development of the island.

Elba Island

The “Island I would like Lab” in Elba Island has added another important dimension, bringing regional authorities, municipalities, RE communities, experts, citizens and the CO2 PACMAN project team together, considering ways on how Elba can foster and adopt climate-neutrality actions. Testimonies collected for Elba Island confirm once again the idea that it represents a 'living laboratory' where the process of decarbonisation, renewable energy production, spatial planning and overall participation can be measured.



Figure 24 2nd Island I Would Like Lab Elba

Mr. David Barontini, Vice Governor delegate for Environment, Circular

Economy and Climate of Tuscany Region, stressed the possibility of transferring experiences, obtained in Elba in other regions. Moreover, according to him, *“activities like the local Lab can generate innovative ideas for many other territories”*. He stated that *“what happens in Elba is only part of the process of climate neutrality, underlining that “islands are a good context for experimenting with decarbonisation since the effects can be better measured”*. For Tuscany Region when it comes to climate-neutrality transition, he emphasized the necessity of adequate spatial planning and creation of acceleration zones. One of the key messages that Mr. Barontini delivered was *“the necessity for the policy making institutions to “listen to the territories” and base their actions on scientific based evidence”*.

Mr. Simone Barbi, Mayor of Marciana, presented Elba as *a territory with high potential to become a “zero-emission island”*. Referring to the studies carried out by Universities of Siena and Florence (regarding the greenhouse gas emissions assessment and the landscape analysis of the island) as an important step that needs to be taken, the mayor stressed the urgent need for initiating practical steps. According to the Mayor *“these actions require cooperation not only between local actors but also with higher-level institutions up to the national level. What is important is the simplification of bureaucracy, since the process of transition has to be rapid”*. He stressed the significance of a planning processes which must be coordinated and well structured. In the case of Elba, *“a transition towards climate neutrality should be planned collectively with the use of forums like the conference of mayors or even other mechanisms of collaborative management”*. Finally, he praised the need for broad public engagement and awareness raising. *“Young people may be interested in the whole idea, but others remain sceptical. For this reason, there is a need for meetings aimed at explaining the benefits of carbon neutrality”*.

Mr. Claudio Della Lucia, President of the Elba Island Renewable Energy Community, connected the Lab to the activities of their local energy community. Their goals are like those pursued by the project. In a tourism-dependent territory, energy produced during peak times could be used by locals to warm/cool their houses during winter/summer. Thus, the energy transition actions can serve the tourism infrastructure that is needed due to tourism offer. In addition, Mr. Della Lucia stressed that *it is necessary to combine small energy communities working at the local level with the larger-scale cooperation at the provincial level*. Local initiatives can receive a boost due to synergies and economies of scale “.

Mr. Alfonso Pecoraro Scanio, President of the UniVerde Foundation, placed the Elba experience into the broader context of the renewable energy production. He underlined that *“the starting point in this process is to assess the potential of the territory in terms of solar, wind, water and other*

renewable energy sources while maintaining sustainability of this process and involving citizens “. This testimony links Elba with the current energy crisis and proves that the abandonment of fossil fuels brings resilience and reinforces local independence. Mr. Scanio also stressed the need for planning processes and accompanying digital technologies. In particular, *“new information systems and AI tools may be used to simplify authorisation procedures and solve probable misconceptions and conflicts”*.

Professor Simone Bastianoni, CO2 PACMAN Project Coordinator, of the University of Siena, defined the participation process as a main result of the Lab activities in Elba. Indeed, the project created an opportunity for politicians and citizens to discuss how decarbonisation can be realistic in the territory. In his view, the most valuable outcome from Elba is the method proposed for climate policy dialogue. It is useful since citizens can be involved in the co-designing and decision-making process, narrowing their disbeliefs. It is especially true for the cases when climate measures face certain resistance and might seem like a top-down decision.

In particular, the simulations carried out with the CO2 PACMAN Tool, the greenhouse gases balance, and the citizen interviews were mentioned as important outcomes of the Lab. The citizen survey showed a very promising result – more than 70% respondents said they were ready to launch various actions that can lead to carbon neutrality. Such result demonstrates that local communities cannot be excluded from decision making procedures. The CO2 PACMAN Tool was presented as a mechanism of fertile dialogue aimed at analysing various types of interventions needed and their consequent impact.

Crete Island

The ‘Crete I’d like Lab’, held in Rethymno on 28-29 April 2026, brought together the younger generation, students, local authorities, researchers, entrepreneurs and businesses, tourism actors, urban planners, development organisations, research institutes and citizens to co-design a roadmap towards climate neutrality for the island, embracing a shared future for a zero-carbon future. The three-day participatory living lab demonstrated that

Crete is ready to take decisive steps toward decarbonisation, combining scientific expertise with strong community engagement.



Figure 25 3rd Island I Would like Lab Crete

Mayor of Rethymno and President of the Regional Union of Municipalities of Crete, Georgios Marinakis, stressed that: *"local governments cannot act alone – climate neutrality requires alignment across municipal, regional, and national levels, as well as active involvement from businesses, citizens, and young people."*

Prof. Theocharis Tsoutsos, TUC-RESEL Director, noted that *"The Crete Lab shows that science can meaningfully engage with society. Young people, local authorities, and citizens came together around a shared vision, and our role as a Technical University was simply to provide the knowledge and the space to make that partnership possible"*.

Prof. Simone Bastianoni (University of Siena), CO2 PACMAN Project Coordinator, highlighted the added value of the tools developed by CO2 PACMAN and stated that *"collaboration between science, local authorities and citizens is the only way to make climate neutrality a realistic goal for Mediterranean islands"*.

Stavroula Tournaki, Director of Development and EU projects at TUC-RESEL, and Crete's living lab coordinator, said that *"witnessing students, citizens, and decision-makers around the same table., sharing ideas and speaking the same language, reminded why this work matters. The CO2 PACMAN tools provided a common ground, but it was people who gave a meaning, energy and enthusiasm to the co-creation process."*

Nikos Xylouris, Vice Governor for Environment, Region of Crete covered the Region's commitment to aligning with EU Green Deal targets, as a major Mediterranean island: *"the Region of Crete is determined to lead by example, we have the political will, the expertise, and above all the responsibility to make this transition real, just, and irreversible for future generations."*

Sokrates Kefalogiannis, Mayor of Anogeion, stressed the importance of including mountain and rural communities in the transition, noting that *"climate neutrality cannot be an urban privilege, every village, every community must be part of this journey"*.

Ioannis Malandrakis, Mayor of Platanias, highlighted the potential of coastal municipalities as living laboratories for climate action, combining renewable energy, sustainable tourism, and coastal ecosystem protection. He underlined that *"municipalities on the frontline of climate change must also be on the frontline of climate action, and inter-municipal cooperation is essential to achieve on a real scale"*.

David Barontini, Regional Councillor for Environment and Climate Change of Tuscany Region, stressed the importance of transferring good practices across territories and reinforced his message that *"islands are the ideal context for experimenting with decarbonisation, as the results can be clearly measured and the lessons may be shared with the rest of Europe"*. .

Theodoros Ninos, President of the Board of Directors of the Development Agency of Crete[OAK], stressed that green infrastructure, and local circular economy investments must be at the heart of Crete's development model, adding that *"climate neutrality is not a cost but an investment in resilience and competitiveness of the island for the generations to come, with water security as a critical aspect."*

Mr. Marinos Kritsotakis, General Director of Environment (Region of Crete) stressed that *"an effective roadmap must have a single strategic framework with shared goals, a common carbon carbon accounting system."*

Kyriakos Kotsoglou, Deputy Regional Governor for Tourism, highlighted the sustainable tourism as a cornerstone of Crete's transition, and called for a strategic reorientation of the tourism model towards quality, authenticity, and environmental responsibility, arguing that *"Crete's tourism future depends on its ability to preserve its natural and cultural assets that make us unique – sustainability is not a constraint but the foundation of Crete's competitiveness and initiatives like CO2 PACMAN can help to inspire the community and the tourism sector"*.



Figure 26 3rd Island I Would like Lab Crete

Stylianos Spanoudakis, Deputy Mayor for Environment and Circular Economy, linked management waste to climate targets and emphasised the need to move beyond linear production and consumption models, noting that *"the circular economy is not a niche policy but a practical path to carbon neutrality; every kilogram of waste reduced, reused, or recycled is a direct contribution to our climate goals. We must transform the citizen from a passive recipient of a service, into an active link of the process."*

Konstantinos Schoinas, Vice President of the Rethymno Hoteliers' Association, stressed the competitive advantage that sustainability certification and green practices can offer to the tourism sector, noting that *"the travelers of tomorrow will choose destinations that respect the environment – Crete must be ready to be that destination"*.

Mrs. Georgia Manolitsi, Chair of the Rethymno Prefectural Committee of the Technical Chamber of Greece mentioned that *"for the contribution of citizens and businesses to this entire effort, what is needed is an institutional framework, technical solutions, and financing tools. climate action must be understood as "an improvement in quality of life, not an obligation."*

Mr. Tasos Papadourakis, hotelier, agreed that *"small-scale, on-site solutions are crucial. Beyond composting, recording organic waste with sensor-based systems can help develop more effective management solutions, and the hoteliers should further investigate how it turns to a feasible solution."*

Mr. Vasilis Myriokefalitakis, Municipality of Rethymno, said that *"Sometimes simple solutions can yield immediate results with minimum investment. Let's start doing something step by step."*

Hara Afentaki (Development Agency of Crete), emphasised the agency's role in channeling European funds and technical support towards green investment projects, stressing that *"financing instruments must be aligned with the island's decarbonisation roadmap to ensure that climate neutrality translates into tangible economic opportunities for local communities"*.

Vasilis Theodorakis, President of the Municipal Port Fund of Rethymno, underlined the the importance of integrating renewable energy into port operations and developing sustainable maritime services, concluding that *"the sea is Crete's greatest asset – managing it responsibly and transitioning maritime activities to clean energy is both an economic opportunity and an obligation to future generations"*.

As a conclusion of the Lab was that climate-neutrality roadmaps cannot follow a one-size-fits-all approach: The roadmap can, ought to, and must be tailored for small island municipalities and their community needs. It should be adapted and differentiate from that of urban centers, and emphasis must be placed on energy and water conservation.



Figure 27 3rd Island I Would like Lab Crete

6. Conclusions

CO2 PACMAN Flagship Initiatives prove that **climate neutrality in Mediterranean islands cannot be achieved based on technical considerations only**. It requires governance will, multi-framework cooperation, social acceptance, local ownership and strong policy commitment. Thanks to the CO2 PACMAN Flagship Initiatives implemented in Brač, Crete and Elba, it has been proven that concrete achievements can occur when scientific evidence is combined with participative actions involving public authorities, citizens, enterprises, youth representatives, researchers and innovators. CO2 PACMAN has proven that climate neutrality does not depend only on technical aspects and policies but relies also on the role of trust, shared ownership, cooperation and participation.

Brač, Crete and Elba examples indicate that the Mediterranean islands can actively lead the transition towards climate neutrality, turning their vulnerabilities such as water scarcity, tourism industry pressures, unsustainable waste management practices and mobility problems, energy dependence, landscape preservation pressures and climate-related threats etc. into innovation drivers through cooperation and fertile dialogue.

By implementing the Flagship activities within the selected pilot territories, the **CO2 PACMAN project has enabled the transformation of local challenges into co-designed decarbonization pathways**. The Rooting Labs, The Island I Would Like Labs, Youth Think Tanks, AskyourcitizenonCaN survey, Open Innovation process, the Valencia Business Forum and stakeholder mapping activities have helped the three islands to go through the phase of diagnosis, active dialogue, co-design and implementation of solutions. The Open Innovation process and Valencia Business Forum have represented a means of overcoming geographical barriers to innovation, by connecting the needs of the territories with innovative pan-European SMEs, startups, researchers, investors and/or solution providers.

Communication and storytelling contributed to the achievement of climate-neutrality objective by increasing awareness, fostering participation and educating the local audiences.

The CO2 PACMAN interactive map visualizes the network of stakeholders engaged in the project, such as public authorities, partners, associated partners, schools, SMEs, NGOs, innovators and other local actors, reinforcing future cooperation.

Among the main learnings of CO2 PACMAN, is **the key role that public authorities can play when visions need to be transformed into concrete**

governance procedures. The municipal administrations, regional authorities, public organizations, national entities (Partners and Associated Partners or even other local stakeholders) have helped connect project outputs with existing local policy priorities and future planning/regulating measures.

The CO2 PACMAN Toolkit for the Development of Climate Neutrality Scenarios (Output 1.1) represents a major transferable and replicable output of CO2 PACMAN. It is designed to be tested and transferred in more Mediterranean islands and coastal territories. By using the toolkit, more Mediterranean islands will be able to analyze their current status, identify and engage the local stakeholders, elaborate different scenarios and develop transition roadmaps towards climate neutrality.

Thanks to the Flagship Initiatives, CO2 PACMAN project generated several forms of value:

- improvement of institutional cooperation,
- structured engagement of stakeholders,
- awareness raising about climate neutrality among citizens and youth,
- creation of tools for evidence-based climate-neutrality planning,
- creation of links between climate neutrality and innovation actors,
- creation of transferable methods.

Testimonials collected in the framework of CO2 PACMAN prove how participants interpret climate neutrality in relation to their personal experiences, responsibilities and hopes for the future of their territory.

Thanks to the Testimonials and their evaluation:

CO2 PACMAN amplified the voices of local communities!



Figure 28 VR simulation

7. Annexes

Annex I: Digital Platforms and Online Resources

The following digital platforms and online resources supported the implementation, communication, dissemination, transferability, and capitalization of the CO2 PACMAN project. They provide access to project information, stakeholder engagement tools, open innovation activities, audiovisual material, and digital outputs developed or used during the project lifecycle.

Official CO2 PACMAN Project Website

<https://co2pacman.interreg-euro-med.eu>

The official project website served as the main institutional entry point for information on CO2 PACMAN. It presented the project objectives, partnership, activities, news, events, outputs, and results. It also supported the dissemination of project updates and ensured public visibility within the Interreg Euro-MED framework.

CO2 PACMAN Interactive Platform

<https://www.co2pacman.eu>

The CO2 PACMAN interactive platform supported access to project-related information, tools, and digital outputs. It contributed to the broader digital ecosystem of the project and supported the accessibility and transferability of project results.

Open Innovation Collaborative Platform

<https://openinnovationcolab.com>

The Open Innovation Collaborative Platform supported the connection between local island challenges and external innovators, SMEs, startups, research actors, and solution providers. It was used to facilitate the open innovation process and to support the transition from territorial needs to practical solution opportunities.

Open Innovation Catalogue and Challenges Platform

<https://www.innovationcolab.eu>

This platform presented the Open Innovation Catalogue and the challenges connected with CO2 PACMAN and related collaborative initiatives. It supported the communication of local challenges, proposed solutions, and innovation opportunities in a structured and accessible format.

CO2 PACMAN Interactive Map

<https://map.co2pacman.eu>

The CO2 PACMAN Interactive Map visualises the stakeholder ecosystem developed throughout the project. It includes actors involved in Rooting Labs, The Island I Would Like Labs, Youth Think Tanks, Open Innovation activities, the Valencia Business Forum, and other project-related actions. The platform supports stakeholder visibility, cooperation continuity, matchmaking, and future transferability.

CO2 PACMAN Tool

<https://co2pt.unisi.it>

The CO2 PACMAN Tool supported the assessment and exploration of climate-neutrality scenarios. It helped translate greenhouse gas data and mitigation options into a more accessible and interactive format, supporting public authorities, stakeholders, and citizens in understanding possible transition pathways and discussing climate-neutrality measures.

AskyourcitizenonCaN Platform

<https://askyourcitizenoncan.unisi.it>

The AskyourcitizenonCaN platform supported the collection of citizens' perceptions, expectations, and attitudes regarding climate neutrality across the pilot islands. It contributed to the social dimension of the evaluation by providing structured feedback from local communities and helping to connect technical planning with public awareness and acceptance.

YouTube Channel and Audiovisual Material

<https://www.youtube.com/@CO2PACMAN>

The project's YouTube and audiovisual materials include interviews, Vox Populi videos, event recordings, partner statements, and storytelling content. These resources supported the communication of project activities and helped present climate-neutrality transition through real voices and direct experiences.

Spotify Podcast Series

<https://open.spotify.com/show/4Zh2yY50ZdNhvtVjoHJ3KI>

The Spotify podcast series provided an additional storytelling and dissemination channel. Through audio-based communication, the project was able to share reflections on sustainability, climate neutrality, territorial challenges, and project experiences in a more conversational and accessible format.

Tables and figures

List of figures

Figure 1 1st Rooting Lab Brač	14
Figure 2 2nd Rooting Lab Crete.....	15
Figure 3 3rd rooting Lab Elba.....	16
Figure 4 CO2 PACMAN Toolkit	17
Figure 5 CO2 PACMAN Official website	19
Figure 6 CO2 PACMAN Instagram	19
Figure 7 CO2 PACMAN LinkedIn	20
Figure 8 CO2 PACMAN YouTube Channel	20
Figure 9 CO2 PACMAN Spotify.....	21
Figure 10 CO2 PACMAN Podcast Series	21
Figure 11 Mediterranean Open Innovation Hub Platform	22
Figure 12 Open Innovation Collaborative Action platform	23
Figure 13 CO2 PACMAN interactive platform	23
Figure 14 CO2 PACMAN Tool	24
Figure 15 CO2 PACMAN interactive Stakeholder map	24
Figure 16 AskyourcitizenonCaN	25
Figure 17 AskyourcitizenonCaN Results in Elba Island.....	26
Figure 18 AskyourcitizenonCaN Results in Brač Island	27
Figure 19 AskyourcitizenonCaN Results in Crete Island.....	28
Figure 20 1st Rooting Lab Brač	31
Figure 21 2nd Rooting Lab Crete	34
Figure 22 3rd Rooting Lab Elba	35
Figure 23 1st Island I Would Like Lab Brač.....	40
Figure 24 2nd Island I Would Like Lab Elba	40
Figure 25 3rd Island I Would like Lab Crete	43
Figure 26 3rd Island I Would like Lab Crete.....	45
Figure 27 3rd Island I Would like Lab Crete	46
Figure 28 VR simulation	48

List of tables

Table 1 Cumulative overview of public authorities engaged across the Rooting Labs and “Island I Would Like” Living Labs in the three pilot islands.....	12
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