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Athens Hosts the CO2 PACMAN Impact Forum on Climate Neutrality and Regional Transformation

Athens, Greece – 22 May 2026

The CO2 PACMAN Impact Forum, entitled "Co-designing Pathways to Climate Neutrality: From Island Experience to Broader Implications", successfully concluded in Athens after two days of dialogue on the future of climate-neutral Mediterranean territories.

Held on 21–22 May 2026, the Forum brought together representatives of European institutions, regional and local authorities, universities and research centres, civil society organisations and youth groups. The event marked the conclusion of the Interreg Euro-MED CO2 PACMAN project, coordinated by the University of Siena, which has developed participatory and landscape-based approaches to climate transition across three Mediterranean pilot islands: Brač (Croatia), Crete (Greece) and Elba (Italy).

The presence of Vangelis Marinakis, President of Develop Athens S.A., the official municipal development agency for the City of Athens, and David Barontini, Vice Governor delegate for Environment, Circular Economy and Climate of Tuscany Region, underscored the institutional relevance of the project's outcomes.

Marinakis outlined Athens' active sustainability agenda, from tackling energy poverty to expanding green infrastructure and supporting citizens' energy communities, stressing that community involvement is essential for implementing these policies. Barontini emphasised the importance of resilient territories and European territorial cooperation, stating that regions cannot combat climate change alone. He announced that Tuscany is developing a regional climate law in collaboration with a small team of experts, including Prof. Bastianoni, demonstrating how scientific expertise and institutional commitment can work together at the regional level. Both representatives signalled that the results produced for the pilot islands have generated concrete interest well beyond the project's original boundaries.

At the core of the Forum were the results achieved for the three islands: direct connections between local businesses, SMEs and external research and innovation



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actors; a simulation tool allowing local stakeholders to model and compare decarbonisation strategies; landscape scenarios translating energy needs and territorial data into coherent spatial visions — from the requalification of former mining landscapes and renewable energy implementation to the integration of olive groves and forests into carbon strategies — brought to life through virtual reality environments that enabled stakeholders and citizens to explore possible changes to the island landscape. This visualization has been presented in the Forum and it will help connect technical planning with public perception, enhancing the participatory aspect of the transition process.

These strands converge in the Climate Neutrality Roadmaps: mid-term planning instruments in the hands of each territory.

Interventions by the representatives of the three pilot islands of the CO2 PACMAN project, Nikos Xylouris (Vice Governor of Region of Crete), Vanja Purić (Director of LAG BRAČ of Brač Island) and Claudio Della Lucia (President of the Renewable Energy Community of Elba Island and delegate of the network of municipalities of Elba), provided insight into the process of design and co-designing of locally adapted pathways towards sustainable and resilient future in the Mediterranean region.

Significant was the role of young people, students from the pilot High schools participated not just as observers but as active contributors, presenting proposals on renewable energy, sustainable mobility and circular economy. Their engagement was one of the Forum's clearest signals: the communities that will live the transition are already committed to shaping it.

The final message emerging from the Forum was clear: achieving climate neutrality in the Mediterranean requires scientific knowledge, public participation, territorial sensitivity and long-term institutional cooperation. The CO2 PACMAN Impact Forum marked both the conclusion of an important European cooperation project and the beginning of new opportunities for collaboration towards a sustainable and inclusive Mediterranean future.



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