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Athens Hosts Landmark Mediterranean Forum on Climate Neutrality and Territorial Transformation

Athens, Greece – 22 May 2026

The CO2 PACMAN Impact Forum, titled "Co-designing Pathways to Climate Neutrality: From Island Experience to Broader Implications" was successfully concluded in Athens after two days of discussion and debate dedicated to the future of climate-neutral territories in the Mediterranean.

The Forum took place on 21 and 22 May 2026 at the Divani Acropolis Hotel under the impressive sight of the Acropolis. Invited representatives of European institutions, regions and local authorities, academia and research centres, civil society organizations, innovation agents, youth organizations and Mediterranean collaboration networks participated in a series of discussions on the challenges and opportunities presented by the green transition of our economies and societies. Opening speeches by Vangelis Marinakis on behalf of the Municipality of Athens and David Barontini representing the Region of Tuscany underscored the critical role of regional cooperation and integration of climate policies in the transition of the Mediterranean region to climate-neutrality. Interventions by the representatives of the three pilot islands of the CO2 PACMAN project, Nikos Xylouris from Crete, Vanja Purić from Brač Island and Claudio Della Lucia from Elba Island, provided insight into the process of design and co-designing of locally adapted pathways towards sustainable and resilient future in the Mediterranean region.

The successful organization of the Impact Forum was a great success for the ongoing Interreg Euro-MED CO2 PACMAN project, aimed at designing a strategic, participatory and trans-national approach to climate change adaptation and mitigation through landscape-based energy transition and sustainable territorial transformations. Discussions held during the two days of the Forum covered issues related to climate resilience, decarbonisation strategies, regional cooperation, citizen involvement and future of Mediterranean islands and coastal territories.

Participants had the chance to learn about tangible strategies and results of the project being implemented in its pilot territories. It was emphasized in the discussion devoted to the case of Brač Island that the island has already achieved its target to



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become climate-neutral due to the high carbon absorbing potential of its forests and olive groves. Innovative pathways, such as installation of photovoltaic panels on rooftops, afforestation programs, development of electric mobility and sustainable tourism marketing were suggested as key approaches towards achieving resilience and energy independence in Brač. For Crete Island, climate transition scenarios addressed the challenges and opportunities for integrating renewable energy in a sustainable way, developing sustainable mobility options, transforming behaviour towards climate change mitigation and implementing climate-smart territorial planning. The discussions indicated a high level of enthusiasm amongst the youth population to adopt innovative and landscape-aware climate policies which could secure a sustainable future for generations to come. As far as Elba Island is concerned, discussions on climate-neutral planning scenarios presented examples of how energy transition strategies may be effectively complemented with landscape preservation efforts, social acceptance of innovation and sustainable territorial development initiatives. Presentations examined topics like renewables-based energy system integration, regeneration of former mining sites and innovative planning tools for efficient climate investments.

Through the Forum, there was significant focus on the role of climate neutrality policies based on landscape. The main emphasis was that any climate transitions in the Mediterranean territories need to be sensitive to local landscape, culture, and identity while pursuing sustainability goals. At the same time, it was highlighted that sustainability cannot be separated from territorial quality. There was also significant attention dedicated to innovations and technologies used to present climate transition strategies and discuss their implications. Visualisation systems and immersive virtual reality applications developed throughout the project allowed the participants to experience climate transition scenarios related to integration of renewable energy and decarbonisation of territories.

One of the most exciting parts of the forum was the contribution made by young people who participated in the event. They gave presentations on proposals regarding reducing carbon footprint, implementing renewable energy sources, adopting circular economy practices and implementing sustainable mobility solutions. These presentations showed the important role of youth in shaping the future of climate governance and sustainability. Another crucial element of the forum was the discussion of broader Mediterranean cooperation initiatives and capitalization opportunities. There was much discussion about the new initiative



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known as the Ecosystemic Transition hUb (ETU). This platform is aimed at transferring proven climate neutrality and sustainability policies between the territories and supporting their replication.

Practical examples of urban sustainability strategies were provided by the Municipality of Athens. The forum saw the presentation of the measures adopted to address energy poverty, enhance green urban infrastructure, implement digital transformation measures, sustainable mobility strategies and climate adaptation policies. Among the results achieved, there was planting over 12,000 trees, implementation of electric municipal transportation services, creation of citizens' energy communities and helping energy vulnerable households. Finally, there was much discussion of networking, cooperation and collaboration of Mediterranean stakeholders and European initiatives. Representatives of thematic missions and governance projects emphasized the need for strengthening the policy transfer framework so that local experiences would contribute to the Mediterranean and European climate agenda.

The final message given by the participants is that climate neutrality needs to include all the components such as scientific expertise, public involvement, territorial and landscape sensitivity and institutional collaboration. There needs to be a long-term collaborative effort towards the sustainable and socially inclusive Mediterranean climate neutrality agenda. The CO2 PACMAN Impact Forum can be considered both the finale of an important European cooperation initiative and its new beginning.