Island's choice as meeting site highlights status as touchstone of awareness and conservation outcomes

Consell de Formentera President Alejandra Ferrer was in charge of welcoming participants at the first face-to-face gathering of the Mediterranean Network for Posidonia (Xarxa Mediterrània per a la Posidonia, XMP). The days ahead will see members of governments and entities from eleven Mediterranean states unite behind the goal of common policy for posidonia conservation.

The initiative has roots in a November 2019 meeting held in Greece which featured representatives of the European Union and of most of the European countries of the Mediterranean. One of the main points on the docket was creation of a network of contacts to build synergies for a future European conservation strategy for posidonia seagrass.

President Ferrer drew attention to the Formentera government's long-standing committment to protecting posidonia, reviewed municipal proposals to regulate anchoring ships and once again asked the responsible authorities to assist in the implementation of such proposals. "This summer laid bare just how vital it will be for Formentera to start acting in line with our needs and carrying capacity; in this our priority must be the environment, heritage and our residents' quality of life", she said. "Formentera has done a lot of fighting and we're pioneers in many preservation- and sustainability-driven initiatives, including our network of vehicle recharge points, the formentera.eco scheme to restrict in-bound vehicles, caps on permits for tourist beds, eliminating plastic bags... We've done everything that we were able to do on land, but we lack strong measures at sea. Other Mediterranean destinations' actions have a direct impact on our coastline and the growth of the nautical sector is unsustainable", she insisted.

For his part, the Balearic Minister of Environment, Miquel Mir, emphasised the importance of an initiative "that would frame the roadmap towards a common, European Commission-endorsed marine conservation policy". Mir applauded Formentera's choice as the meeting site "because it is a European reference in terms of public awareness and actions in support of posidonia conservation", adding that "this gathering cements the Balearic Islands' trailblazing role adopting and enacting effective policies to protect a species that is vital for undersea habitats in the Mediterranean".

The encounter is being hosted by the Balearic Ministry of the Environment and Territory and the French Biodiversity Office (OFB) in association with the LIFE Marha project and the Consell de Formentera. Cyrile Barnerias, who heads the OFB's European and international relations division, pointed out that "the EU protects posidonia in accordance with the Natura 2000 directives. In France, posidonia meadows are carefully safeguarded, not just within protected marine areas. The XMP roadmap allows for greater cooperation to support stewardship".

In the coming days, attendees will learn first-hand about policies to safeguard underwater seed-bearing plants that are being implemented on Formentera and in the region — both of which are fulcrums of efforts to legislate posidonia conservation. Also on hand at the encounter were representatives of the Valencian regional government, the governments of France, Malta, Cyprus, Montenegro and Greece, as well as universities and scientific and environmental organisations from across the Mediterranean.

21 September 2020
Communications Office
Consell de Formentera