

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN THE FIGHT AGAINST PLASTIC POLLUTION IN THE BIOSPHERE RESERVE OF MENORCA



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More than a project, an alliance

Over the last few years, five local non-profit organisations have been working to reduce the presence of plastic waste in the Biosphere Reserve of Menorca and as a consequence of this, in 2020 the five organisations decided to create the *Plastic Free Menorca Alliance*, in order to join forces against plastic pollution.

The **Plastic Free Menorca Alliance** is made up of **GOB-Menorca**, the **Socio-Environmental Observatory of Menorca**, **Per la Mar Viva**, the **Leader Illa Menorca Association** and the **Menorca Preservation Fund** and has 4 main objectives:

1. Create a **Plastic Free Certification** for all those business and entities wishing to reduce their use of single use plastics and needing some support and advice to do so.
2. Develop a **Guide of local businesses and suppliers offering alternatives to SUP** and sharing that information to citizens and businesses.
3. Develop a **Guide on alternatives to SUP** and offer information to citizens, business and others local actors in how they can prioritise which alternatives to choose from.
4. Be the **coordination platform** for all local actors and entities that are working against plastic pollution on Menorca to ensure we are aligned and maximising both resources and the impact we are all able to have in this area.

Five entities, one common goal

The entities that make up the Alliance have been working and continue to work towards a Plastic Free Menorca, both as an alliance and under their own projects. Some of the top results achieved so far include:



GOB Menorca's **Commitment2020NoPlastic project**, has resulted in more than 235.000 single use objects, including cutlery and plastic bags, being replaced by more sustainable alternatives in less than two years, as well as **44 entities and 23 schools** signing up to this commitment.

A volunteer led organisation that in less than 3 years has: collected more than 1 **tonne** of plastic waste from Menorcan waters; more than **13 tonnes** of plastic waste from Menorca's coastline; has carried out **educational talks** on plastic to over 4,000 people and has created an exhibition called "**A sea of Plastics**" which has had more than **4,000 visitors** in less than 1 year.



OBSAM has more than two decades of experience in **environmental research** on the Menorca Biosphere Reserve and over the last couple of years have been key to the fight against plastic by carrying out relevant studies to support marine conservation projects, including, Plastic Free Menorca. This includes analysing marine and coastal impacts around the island **IUCN's Plastic Waste-Free Islands Med project** and biological monitoring of our *Posidonia oceanica* meadows.

LEADER's "**More fish, less plastic**" worked with local fishmongers to reduce their use of plastic bags and with fishermen to identify and remove ghost fishing nets. To date the campaign results are: participation of **16 shops**, distribution of **80,000 compostable bags**; **1 fish market** making compostable bags obligatory for all stands, more than **70,000 views** of the campaign video and **6 ghost nets removed**. Separately, LEADER also supported the instalation of a water treatment plant.



The fight against plastic pollution, along with marine conservation, are priority areas of work for the MEPF and to date they have granted just over **150.000 €** to support this work and the brilliant local organisations working in this area, including those mentioned above, along with **leading the creation of the Plastic Free Menorca Alliance**.

The citizen response obtained in recent campaigns such as those mentioned here shows that there is a growing social concern around this issue. And yet, we are far from being a plastic free island, with high ratios of waste generation, plastic pollution points to the sea, high presence of plastic in our environment and an excessive use of SUP in the individual and economic sphere. For this reason, we feel the Alliance is an important opportunity to create a common framework between NGO's, entities, business, citizens and local government to make a real change and address the need to urgently and drastically reduce the Menorca Biosphere Reserve's plastic pollution.

In particular in light of the extension of the Menorca Biosphere Reserve's expansion towards the sea, making it the largest marine biosphere reserve in the Mediterranean and providing an essential platform to become a model for sustainability.