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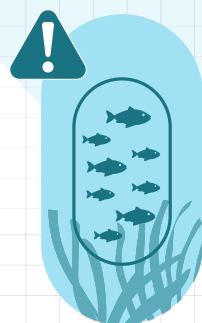
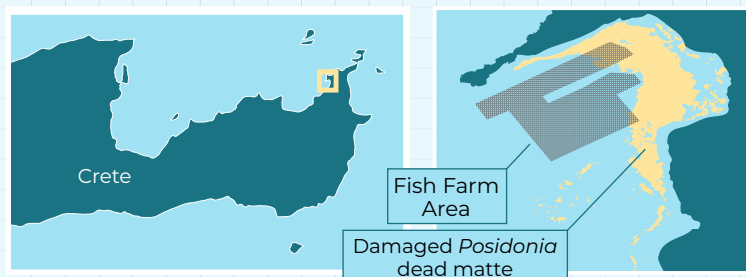


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Seagrass Restoration Policy: Key Recommendations

Atzikiari Bay, Siteia, Crete, Greece

Site Context & Ecological Baseline



National Status: Unfavourable-Inadequate (U1) across the national biogeographical scale under the EU Habitats Directive.

Status: Natura 2000 site is healthy, but Atzikiari Bay suffers an estimated 66% loss of meadow extent and severe fragmentation from historical fish farm operations.

Action: Active pilot transplantations launched in May 2025 to accelerate recovery.

Key Findings & Realities



Strong Legal Protection:

Backed by explicit legal frameworks (e.g., Law 5037/2023 binding national nature targets) safeguarding endemic marine habitats and prohibiting aquaculture over meadows.



High Scientific Capacity:

Backed by excellent national research institutions (e.g., HCMR) with robust expertise in tracking seagrass health, blue carbon data, and pilot methodology.



Fragmented Governance:

Operational restoration remains vague and project-dependent because Greece lacks a dedicated national framework to coordinate administrative responsibilities or secure long-term funding.

Priority Policy Recommendations



Establish a coherent national restoration framework: Transition away from isolated, short-term project cycles by establishing a structured, multi-annual national framework to operationalize Greece's binding nature targets under Law 5037/2023 and scale up active transplantation in Atzikiari Bay.



Strengthen institutional coordination: Resolve overlapping competencies among authorities by clearly allocating operational mandates and institutional leadership across the Ministry of Environment and Energy, decentralized administrations, and regional environmental authorities to increase overall policy effectiveness.



Embed structured stakeholder engagement at site level: Actively involve local authorities, fisheries representatives, and tourism operators throughout planning and implementation to communicate the **ecological, economic and social benefits** clearly, build long-term stewardship, and reduce localized resistance to active restoration measures.



Improve monitoring and mapping of *Posidonia* meadows: Prioritize comprehensive habitat mapping and harmonized monitoring protocols to bridge data gaps across reporting frameworks under the Habitats Directive, utilizing strategic public financing instruments like the new LIFE SIP-GR-Blue project.



Ensure predictable public financing while exploring complementary innovative financing mechanisms: While there is cautious stakeholder openness to complementary private funds or blue carbon credit markets as Greece explores a voluntary carbon market, ensure any mechanism is **strictly supervised by public or international bodies and aligned with EU developments and robust scientific standards**.

Main Author(s): The Green Tank, Plan Bleu
Contributors and Reviewers: All partners

Euro-MED0200867

Deliverable Reference: D.4.2.1 –
Policy Recommendations for ARTEMIS Pilot Sites