

The UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Zero Waste

Plastic Free Balearics



Zero waste good practice

Ibiza Preservation and Save the Med

Balearic Islands, Spain

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Table of Contents

Synopsis	01
Stakeholders and Partners	01
Zero Waste	02
Sustainable Development Goals	02
Background, Challenges, Objectives	03
Actions and Implementation	04
Outcomes and Impact	05
Replicability and Scaleability	06
Inclusion and Innovation	06
Accountability	07
Financial Data	07

About

Synopsis

Plastic Free Balearics is a certification launched in 2021 to incentivise the reduction of single-use plastic in the hospitality industry of the Balearic Islands. It helps businesses go beyond their legal obligations under the Balearic Waste Law and European regulations by offering useful tools to help them identify honest alternatives to single-use plastic, such as straws and packaging, and prioritise reusable options to help eliminate and/or reduce waste.

Stakeholders and Partners

The certification was developed jointly by IbizaPreservation and Save the Med Foundation, with co-funding from the association BeMed (Beyond Plastic Med). Following the conclusion of the pilot phase in 2021-2022, Save the Med now validates and issues the certifications with technical support from Plastic Free Ibiza & Formentera and Plastic Free Menorca. The University of the Balearic Islands has collaborated in its development, and it has received plaudits from the Balearic Regional Government.

Implementation
period

2021-now

Country

Spain

Location

Balearic Islands

Key implementor information: <https://en.plasticfreebalearics.org/>

Connection to Zero Waste

Plastic Free Balearics is spearheading a movement to promote zero waste practices within the hospitality sector of the Balearic Islands, targeting one of the region's largest waste contributors. By encouraging the reduction and elimination of single-use plastics (SUP), the initiative incentivizes businesses to adopt eco-friendly alternatives, rewarding their efforts with certification badges ranging from 1 to 5 stars based on their progress towards zero waste.

Since its inception until the close of 2023, the program has successfully certified the reduction of 30,467 kg of plastic waste across the Balearic Islands, with over 100 local companies earning certification. Compliance with local, state, and EU regulations is a prerequisite for certification, and participating businesses receive personalized guidance tailored to their circumstances, assisting them in minimizing their plastic footprint and transitioning towards a zero waste model. Through this comprehensive approach, Plastic Free Balearics aims to drive lasting change in the region's hospitality industry, fostering sustainability and environmental stewardship.

Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals

Plastic Free Balearics is dedicated to achieving specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets. Firstly, it aligns with SDG target 12.5, which aims to substantially reduce waste generation. The initiative achieves this by incentivizing waste reduction, particularly in plastics, and promoting reusable alternatives as the most effective solution.

Additionally, Plastic Free Balearics addresses SDG target 12.6 by encouraging companies to adopt more sustainable practices. This is facilitated through the creation of a comprehensive handbook called "The Guide to Honest Alternatives." This handbook educates businesses about their legal obligations, the recyclability of various materials, and provides guidance on avoiding greenwashing practices, particularly with bioplastics. By doing so, it enhances companies' understanding of sustainability and informs their procurement processes, thus promoting more environmentally responsible choices.

Furthermore, the initiative contributes to achieving SDG target 14.1, which aims to prevent and reduce marine pollution. Plastic Free Balearics collaborates with companies that are sources of waste that could ultimately become marine litter. By working directly with these companies, the initiative removes such items from the supply chain at their source, thereby preventing marine pollution and helping to safeguard marine ecosystems.

Background, Challenges and Objectives

Plastic Free Balearics operates against the backdrop of the Mediterranean, a region heavily impacted by marine plastic pollution, with the Balearic Islands serving as a frontline to this environmental challenge. Daily occurrences of plastic washing ashore and endangering marine life underscore the urgency of addressing this issue. Given the islands' reliance on tourism, the hospitality industry emerges as a significant contributor to waste generation, necessitating targeted intervention. sustainable alternatives, poses a significant challenge.

The project's objective is clear: to tackle the underlying causes of plastic pollution by collaborating with businesses in the hospitality sector to incentivize waste reduction efforts. Despite the introduction of the pioneering Balearic Waste Law in 2019, many businesses remain unaware of their legal obligations or lack knowledge about suitable alternatives to single-use plastics. Furthermore, the prevalence of greenwashing practices among companies, which introduce ostensibly eco-friendly but ultimately unsustainable alternatives, poses a significant challenge.

To address these challenges, Plastic Free Balearics employs a multifaceted approach. Alongside certifying companies committed to waste reduction, the initiative provides vital resources such as the Guide to Honest Alternatives, empowering businesses to make informed decisions. Additionally, it offers a comprehensive roadmap to guide companies on their journey towards achieving zero waste status, with annual reassessments to track progress and incentivize continuous improvement. Through these strategies, Plastic Free Balearics seeks to foster a culture of sustainability within the hospitality sector of the Balearic Islands, ultimately contributing to the preservation of marine ecosystems and the promotion of responsible tourism practices.

“Incentivizing waste reduction while combating greenwashing: Plastic Free Balearics leads the charge in promoting sustainable practices within the hospitality sector, empowering businesses with knowledge and resources to achieve zero waste.”



Plastic Free Balearics, Status Quo

Actions and Implementation

Discover how the Adeta Community of Indigenous Women is being empowered through a transformative project aimed at fostering sustainable development. Plastic Free Balearics embarks on a pivotal mission to combat marine plastic pollution, particularly prevalent in the Mediterranean, by engaging the hospitality sector in the Balearic Islands. With a focus on incentivizing waste reduction and promoting sustainable alternatives, this initiative seeks to revolutionize business practices while safeguarding the region's fragile marine ecosystems. From sensitization initiatives to the installation of innovative cassava processing machinery, each step contributes to economic empowerment and community resilience.

The implementation of the certification process involved a collaborative effort between Ibiza Preservation and Save the Med, spanning 18 months of meticulous planning and development. Leveraging the expertise of both organizations, which had existing certification systems, a comprehensive SWOT analysis was conducted to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Drawing on the insights gleaned, a new certification framework was crafted, amalgamating the best practices while addressing any shortcomings and considering the unique characteristics of the islands.

Plastic Free Menorca also played a crucial role in shaping the proposal, contributing as a beneficiary of the project. To ensure inclusivity and effectiveness, the proposal underwent rigorous scrutiny in focus groups comprising local businesses and experts from the University of the Balearic Islands (UIB). Valuable feedback garnered from these sessions was meticulously integrated into the certification framework.

The certification initiative was then launched in a pilot phase, spanning from June 2021 to March 2022, with over 100 establishments from across the four islands participating. This trial phase served as a crucial testing ground, allowing for the identification of operational nuances and areas for improvement. Lessons learned during this period were carefully incorporated into the initiative, ensuring its continued refinement and effectiveness.

Save the Med remains dedicated to ongoing collaboration with UIB, ensuring the protocols remain robust and compliant with evolving legal requirements at local, national, and European levels. This commitment to continuous improvement underscores the project's dedication to fostering sustainable practices within the Balearic Islands' hospitality sector, ultimately contributing to the preservation of the region's pristine marine ecosystems.

Outcomes and Impact

Since its inception in June 2021, Plastic Free Balearics has granted certification to over 100 businesses, resulting in a substantial reduction of 30,467 Kg of plastic within the supply chain. Notably, in Ibiza and Formentera alone, outreach efforts have directly engaged over 300 companies to promote certification, fostering a culture of sustainability across the region. With a population of 1,315,311 residents and welcoming 16,450,000 tourists annually, this initiative significantly enhances the quality of life for both locals and visitors by reducing plastic pollution in the ecosystem. However, a notable challenge arises from companies failing to meet basic legal obligations outlined in the Balearic Waste Law, prompting IbizaPreservation to spearhead awareness campaigns and workshops within the sector.



>100 businesses

have been awarded Plastic Free Balearics certification since June 2021, resulting in a reduction of 30,467 Kg of plastic from the supply chain.

Outreach

IbizaPreservation's outreach efforts have directly engaged more than 300 companies in Ibiza and Formentera to promote certification.

Residents + Tourists

The Balearic Islands, with a population of 1,315,311 residents and hosting 16,450,000 tourists annually, benefit from the initiative by experiencing a reduced presence of plastic in the

Replicability and Scaleability

The initiative's use of the Hospitality Assessment for Plastic Impact (HAPI) index offers a systematic approach to assessing the environmental footprint of hospitality items, making it adaptable and easily replicable in diverse global contexts. With its focus on reduction and reuse, the suggested alternatives are not only applicable universally but also offer sustainable solutions beyond geographical boundaries. Primarily designed for tourism-dependent regions with thriving hospitality sectors, such as the Balearic Islands, the initiative's principles can be effectively implemented in any locale worldwide, from bustling cities to quaint towns, where single-use plastic usage is prevalent in dining establishments.

Inclusion and Innovation

Plastic Free Balearics champions collaboration between public and private entities to maximize its outreach efforts. Partnering with institutions like the University of the Balearic Islands, the initiative has received support from regional governments and island councils, facilitating the development and dissemination of certification resources. By engaging with local business associations and directly contacting numerous companies, Plastic Free Balearics ensures broad stakeholder involvement in its mission. Moreover, as recipients of BeMed grants, the initiative leverages international networks like SMI-LO and Capi-Med to exchange insights and foster collective action on waste reduction.

The certification process employs the Honest Alternatives to Plastics Index (HAPI), a pioneering tool crafted by Save the Med and environmental consultancy Inédit. HAPI evaluates single-use products based on their environmental impact and compares them with available alternatives, driving informed decision-making among businesses. Additionally, Plastic Free Balearics collaborates with the University of the Balearic Islands to host seminars promoting research and innovation in waste management. By convening experts, policymakers, and local enterprises, these events stimulate discussions on enhancing existing solutions and developing novel approaches to waste reduction.

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Accountability and Sustainability

During the pilot phase, BeMed oversaw the project's advancement, receiving two interim and one final report to track progress. Stakeholder engagement, including local businesses, institutions, and academic experts, provided valuable insights into identifying potential gaps and challenges.

In 2023-24, IbizaPreservation assumes responsibility for reporting progress and outcomes in Ibiza and Formentera to Conservation Collective, per its funding agreement with Depeche Mode. This collaboration supports the implementation of the certification scheme across the two islands. Meanwhile, Save the Med maintains close collaboration with the University of the Balearic Islands and legal experts to uphold the certification's integrity and alignment with evolving legal standards.

Financial Data

The development and pilot phase of the certification, totaling approximately €115k, received €81k in funding from BeMed, with the remainder covered by Save the Med and IbizaPreservation. Key expenses included project management, coordination, technical support, communications, and legal assistance.

Additionally, an external provider was engaged to create a web platform/app for questionnaire completion, along with a project landing page and social media content. Freelance graphic designers were contracted for logo design, certification stamps, and printed materials like the Guide to Honest Alternatives.

For the period spanning summer 2023 to summer 2024, IbizaPreservation has earmarked €22,000 to certify businesses in Ibiza and Formentera. This encompasses outreach activities, questionnaire assistance, initial assessments, and final certification for 50 companies. Funding for this initiative stems from a donation by Depeche Mode, facilitated through their charity partnership with watchmaker Hublot, in alignment with their Memento Mori world tour.



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