
The Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature: An Account of its History and Activities

The **Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature (HSPN)** is the oldest national environmental NGO in Greece, operating continuously since 1951 throughout the country for the protection of nature. From its very inception it has been at the forefront of efforts to establish National Parks, to protect habitats and threatened species of fauna and flora, and to modernise and implement environmental legislation.

From 1958, the position of Secretary General was held by the late Byron Antipas, who was the driving force of the HSPN for the following 35 years. His pivotal role in the early environmental movement in Greece was illustrated by the fact that he was sent as the official representative of the national government in 1971 to sign the Ramsar Convention on behalf of Greece. Antipas' seminal work in nature protection has been widely recognized by many international organizations. In gratitude for his great contribution, the HSPN has established the "Byron Antipas Award", which is bestowed upon non-public organizations or individuals who have contributed significantly to the protection of nature and the environment and have done so in an un-self-interested way over many years. Among the recipients are renowned environmentalist Luc Hoffmann (2005), the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew (2011), widely known Swedish botanist Arne Strid (2017), and Yannis Boutaris (2022) a prominent figure in the Greek environmental movement and founder of ARCTUROS.

For many years the HSPN functioned as a kind of nursery, mainly through the encouragement Antipas gave to young Greeks, to promote nature protection. Its members went on to found other, more specialised organisations such as the Hellenic Ornithological Society, the Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece, and the Hellenic Society for the Study and Protection of the Monk Seal (Mom).

The HSPN is a member of important environmental organizations such as the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO). It also represents in Greece the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), the largest global environmental education organisation, and it operates all five of its international programmes for ESD and sustainable management in the tourism sector. Since 2016, the HSPN is represent on the FEE Board of Directors by its current President, Nikos G. Petrou, who currently holds the position of Vice President.

It works with many other NGOs for common goals, and cooperates with many national authorities at all levels, as well as with NGOs, authorities, and universities in other countries for the implementation of international projects. In addition to its voluntary Board of Directors and its permanent staff members, the HSPN utilises an extensive network of volunteers in a lot of its work, including academics and specialist scientists.

For its work it has received awards from the Academy of Athens, the Council of Europe, and the Ford Foundation.



Today the HSPN is active in 5 main areas:

1. **Environmental Interventions,**
2. **Nature Conservation,**
3. **Environmental Education,**
4. **Sustainable Management in the Tourism Sector,**
5. **Public Awareness Raising.**

1. Environmental Interventions

The HSPN intervenes, alone or in cooperation with other national NGOs, with the public services and with various governmental agencies regarding violations of national or European environmental regulations and laws, or serious threats to the environment. This is done through direct contact, letters or press releases, or, in cases of serious infringement of laws, through legal action, usually in the Council of State, the Supreme Administrative Court of Greece. Examples of this latter form of intervention are the cases against the State over the illegalities in the water-diversion project of the Acheloos and Nestos rivers, the non-compliance with EU regulations requiring the creation of a forest registry, effective protection of specific Natura 2000 sites, the channelization of the Pikrodafni stream, etc. The HSPN is a member of the Antipoison Task Force, a coalition of NGOs trying to control illegal use of poisoned baits through interventions with national and international authorities.

2. Nature Conservation

The HSPN has implemented, alone or cooperating with other NGOs and bodies, national and international, a variety of conservation projects. In the last decade these include:

- **Project LIFE11 NAT/GR/001014 "ForOpenForests" (2012-2019):** The main objective of this 7-year project was the management of forests and forest openings for the conservation of biodiversity at species, habitat, and landscape level in two mountainous NATURA 2000 sites of Central Greece (GR2440004, GR2440006). The targets included priority habitats, mainly Mediterranean temporary ponds (3170*) and species (*Veronica oetaea**, *Ursus arctos**); and 5 Annex I Directive 79/409/EEC birds. The main goals were achieved through: maintenance of forest openings to conserve the mountain grasslands and temporary ponds; conservation of the biotic communities of the temporary ponds, and enhancement of the population of *Veronica oetaea**; restoration of the *Juniperus foetidissima* forests; protection of the conifer forests from wild fires; ex situ conservation of the plant species occurring in the target habitats; protection of the five bird species; protection of *Ursus arctos** population; active involvement of the stakeholders in conservation management. Results also included: 2 Visitor Information Centres; environmental education seminars for teachers; capacity building of local producers; infrastructure for sustainable tourism in the area; legal protection of the project sites. Coordinating Beneficiary: HSPN Co-beneficiaries: University of Athens, Institute of Mediterranean Forest Ecosystems, Region of Sterea Ellada and ARCTOUROS.



- **Biodiversity assessments in Macedonia and Milos (2014-2015):** The main objective of this project was a biodiversity assessment and recommendations for landscape restoration in three mining areas, operated by TITAN Cement Company SA in Central Macedonia (Apsalos east, Apsalos west) and on the island of Milos (Xylokeratia). The main results of the project were: habitat maps of the three mining areas; lists of flora and fauna species of the three mining areas; a set of guidelines and specifications for the elaboration of management measures regarding important species of flora and fauna; a set of proposals for the rehabilitation of the mining areas after completion of the works; recommendations for environmental awareness actions targeting the personnel of TITAN Cement Company SA.
- **Project ICON (2015-2017):** A 15-month project that was implemented under the “Civil Society Dialogue between EU and Turkey - IV Environment Grant Scheme (CSD-IV/ENV)”. Its goal was to inform civil society in Turkey, including relevant local and regional authorities, about flora conservation, focusing on terrestrial orchids. Its actions included the creation of an interactive digital platform and database about all species of wild orchids (approximately 400) shared between Greece and Turkey, creation of educational materials, a documentary, an international conference, etc. Coordinating Beneficiary: Sails-for-Science (Germany) Co-beneficiaries: HSPN, Association for the Conservation of Antalya Orchids and Biodiversity (Turkey).
- **Project LIFE14 GIE/GR/000026 "Natura THEMIS" (2015-2021):** This 5-year project focused on promoting awareness of wildlife crime prosecution and liability for biodiversity damage in NATURA 2000 sites in Crete. The need for the project arose from the understanding that the investigative, prosecutorial and judicial authorities, and the inhabitants and users of Natura 2000 sites in Crete, are not familiar with the capabilities provided by the relevant legislation, the jurisdiction assignments and the conservation status of the protected areas; thus, environmental crimes are, to a great extent, not reported and/or not prosecuted. Outputs of the project included technical guidebooks for various target groups (judges and prosecutors; lawyers; the public), assessment of knowledge and opinions, workshops and seminars, info-days, focused national and international conferences, a great variety of printed and electronic informative material, and an innovative App for smart devices for real-time reporting of environmental crimes by the public. Coordinating Beneficiary: University of Crete-Natural History Museum of Crete. (Co-beneficiaries: HSPN, Coordination Office for the Implementation of Environmental Liability of the Ministry of Environment and Energy, the Bar Association of Chania and the Bar Association of Heraklion).
- **Take Action for the Reduction, Reuse, Recycle of Wastes (2015-2018):** The main objective of the project, coordinated by HSPN, was to raise students' awareness about the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste in their school, their neighbourhood, their city; also, to take actions inside and outside their school in order to increase awareness of relevant issues in their domestic and local environment. Specific objectives included: holding an educational workshop for teachers; implementing environmental educational activities inside and outside the school community; creating and distributing to all participated schools an e-book with all the educational activities that



were implemented, to serve as an educational tool; establishing an Eco-Code; producing a radio and tv message to inform the local community for the project's results; planning a Common Action Day where students and teachers implemented simultaneously environmental activities in order to inform and increase awareness of participants; distributing to all participating schools recycling bins and books with environmental content; producing a video and a poster to disseminate the messages of the project.

- **Project INTERREG MED "POSBEMED" (2016-2018):** The HSPN participated as an associate in this 15-month project, which studied the management, conflicts and opportunities of Mediterranean coastal protected areas and Natura 2000 habitats where interdependence between seagrass meadows, dunes and beaches occurs, in order to provide a Mediterranean strategy and governance model for enhancing the management effectiveness of these areas and beyond. The project was led by EID-MED (France) and partners include the IUCN (Spain), IMC Foundation and ECO-logica (Italy) and the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research.
- **Forest Action for Climate Change Mitigation-"FAFCC" (2017-2018):** The main objective of the project was cooperation between Greek, Bulgarian, Romanian and Cypriot NGOs in order to inform and to increase students' awareness so they would take actions for climate change mitigation. The project focused on "Forest and Climate Change", and its objectives included: the cooperation of students and teachers from all four countries; a 3-day seminar for teachers; environmental educational activities inside and outside the school community; creating an e-book with all the educational activities that were implemented; producing and distributing a rucksack with useful tools for environmental activities in the forest, to serve as an educational tool; producing an Eco-Code from each participating school; producing a common poster in all languages; constructing a 3-D model from FCS materials; distributing the educational activities' e-book to all participating schools; a Common Action Day where students and teachers implemented simultaneously environmental activities in order to inform and increase awareness of local communities; producing a video to disseminate the project's messages. Coordinator: HSPN. Co-beneficiaries: CYMEPA (Cyprus), Bulgarian Blue Flag Movement (Bulgaria), Centrul Carpato-Danubian de Geoecologie (Romania).
- **Project LIFE17 NAT/GR/000511 "LIFE PRIMED" (2018-2024):** The aim of this 5-year project is to improve the conservation status of Annex II of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EC habitats, mainly Mediterranean temporary ponds (3170*) and Alluvial forests (91E0*), and several Annex I of the Habitats Directive species, within SCI GR1150010 Delta Nestou Kai Limnothalasses Keramotis (Delta of River Nestos) and the SCI IT6030022 (Bosco di Palo Laziale). Specific objectives are: to quantify the exact causes of the current unfavourable conservation status and to implement appropriate innovative actions to restore the affected ecosystems; to develop mechanisms that will ensure the continuation of ecosystem conservation and the management actions after the project's end; to present the outcomes to the scientific community and relevant institutions in order to scale-up the restoration, management and valorisation approach in other similar coastal ecosystems of Italy, Greece and Europe; to support



the local and regional economy by engaging residents in the project activities and in the further management and ecotouristic use of the sites; to promote knowledge of the areas, its habitats and species, through outreach and environmental education initiatives. Coordinating Beneficiary: HSPN. Co-beneficiaries: Department of Environmental Biology - Sapienza University of Rome and ARSIAL (Italy), Institute of Mediterranean Forest Ecosystems (Greece).

- **Creation of a Botanical Garden of Aromatic and Medicinal Herbs of Crete (2018-2019):** The HSPN has created a Botanical Garden in the grounds of the Monastery of Metamorphosis (Transfiguration of Jesus) at Varypetro, Chania, in West Crete, making use of the donations in memory of Konstantinos Mitsotakis. The project was implemented in collaboration with the Konstantinos Mitsotakis Foundation and the Holy Monastery of Chrysopigi that courteously provided the land for the development of the Garden.
- **Horizon 2020 "WaysTUP!" (2019-2023):** The 4-year Horizon 2020 project WaysTUP! aimed to establish new value chains for urban bio-waste. The project displayed a range of new products produced from urban bio-waste through bio-based processes, starting from different feedstocks, including fish and meat waste, spent coffee grounds, household source-separated bio-waste, and used cooking oils. In addition, the project aimed to create behavioural change in citizens and local communities, improving and changing longstanding perceptions of urban bio-waste during its implementation. This will overall contribute to a more circular economy. Coordinator: SOCIEDAD ANONIMA AGRICULTORES DE LA VEGA DE VALENCIA (Spain). Co-beneficiaries: University of Alicante, BIOPOLIS, IMECAL, CIEMAT, ADMW, TiX, CIRCE, IVIA and AIMPLAS (Spain), NTUA, TUC, HSPN, SUST and DRAXIS (Greece), BIO-BEAN (UK), NVMT (Italy), TBWR (Austria), IMEC and CREVIS (Belgium), BIOS (Serbia).
- **Ancient Cities for Endemic Flora, From Apollo to Athena "A to A" (2019-2021):** This project was funded by the "Civil Society Dialogue between EU and Turkey Grant Scheme (CSD-V)". Implemented activities included: comparative study of applied policies and methodologies for management of important plant species in archaeological sites; elaboration of common methodologies for monitoring flora in archaeological sites; introduction and application of common environmental policy codes and protocols; a network of stakeholders involved in the management and conservation of archaeological sites; field guides for the identification of plants in archaeological sites; the "Virtual Garden informative App; environmental education material; training sessions and study visit to Greece for exchange of experience and presentation of best practices; awareness and dissemination campaign. Results included: stakeholder cooperation towards sustainable development; improved scientific and administrative capacities of CSOs; improved conservation of local environment; improved citizen awareness and knowledge; improved stakeholder participation in protection of the environment and cultural heritage; common methodologies for monitoring of threatened local flora in archaeological sites; recommendations for management practices in archaeological sites to enhance



conservation of local flora. Coordinator: Association for the Conservation of Antalya Orchids and Biodiversity (CAOB). Co-beneficiary: HSPN.

- **Erasmus+ "EUREKA" (2019-2021):** This project was funded by the EU and France National Agency Erasmus + KA2 programme, and was implemented in four high schools in each of France, Greece, Italy, and Turkey. The main objective was to intervene on Early School Leaving by promoting innovative and digital educational methods and the development of new training courses that foster the attractiveness of the school environment and its key-role for a much smarter and more inclusive society. The project also connected with other EU 2020 strategies regarding climate change (awareness of its effects on the climate and quality of life of population) and unemployment (building up new curricula and better post-scholastic orienteering). Specific objectives included: reduction of early school leavers by developing new forms of education in the school context (digital competences, intercultural exchanges, etc.); reduction of unemployment rate of active population aged 15-24 (e.g. NEET) by building up new curricula, critical thinkers, etc.; promoting better orientation pathways for a conscious academic choosing; increasing knowledge of pupils on environmental sustainability, ecological footprint, and the effects of climate change. Coordinator: Alpes de Lumière (France). Co-beneficiaries: Associazione Istituto Ecoambientale (Italy), HSPN, and Association for the Conservation of Antalya Orchids and Biodiversity (Turkey).
- **Local Quality Covenant and Sustainable Tourism "ECO TOUR" (2019-2020):** The main objective of the project was the cooperation between the Municipalities of Erdemli (Turkey) and Parga (Greece), to promote an innovative model of sustainable tourism that protects and encourages cultural identity, and promotes environmental protection and conservation of natural resources. Main results included: assessment of the state-of-the-art in sustainable tourism; common protocol (Memorandum of Understanding); mutual understanding between Turkish and Greek Municipalities; exchange of experiences between Turkish and Greek municipalities; cooperation and creation of links between local authorities, research institutions and Civil Society Organizations, development of common methodologies in sustainable tourism sector. Coordinator: Municipality of Erdemli (Turkey). Co-beneficiaries: HSPN and Parga Municipality (Greece), University of Mersin (Turkey).
- **Innovative Actions with Citizens to prevent Forest Fires in Kythira (2019 -2021):** This 18-month project was implemented with funding from the Green Fund in the island of Kythira. The innovative element was the inclusion and active participation of citizens in the assessment of fire risk around the villages and planning for prevention. Coordinating Beneficiary: HSPN Co-beneficiary: Institute of Mediterranean Forest Ecosystems.
- **Theoretical approaches and practical implementations in Environmental Education "YUNUS" (2019-2021):** Funded by the Civil Society Dialogue between EU and Turkey Grant Scheme (CSD-V), this project's goal was the transfer of knowledge and expertise between Turkish and Greek stakeholders in the framework of education. Implemented activities included: creation of Best Practice Models with the collection of Models of



Environmental Education applied in EU countries; study visit of Turkish delegation to Greece in order to increase the knowledge level of the competent persons; Summer School for Greek and Turkish teachers, emphasising common and practical approaches; development of common environmental and intercultural education projects about 3 iconic and highly recognisable species that occur in both countries: *Caretta caretta*, *Monachus monachus* and *Ciconia ciconia*; presentation to selected schools in Turkey and Greece and incorporation in the CSOs' activities; development of an Environmental Education webpage; production of three short movies. Results included: development of a dialogue between Greek and Turkish CSOs on education based on the principles of environment awareness raising and sustainability; exchange of best practices between two CSOs, and creation of sustainable structures to stimulate exchange between local administrations in Turkey and local authorities in EU countries through common approaches; transfer of knowledge and expertise between Turkish and Greek Education stakeholders; increased awareness of teachers and students about environmental issues and conservation; development and implementation of common and intercultural environmental educational programmes. Coordinator: HSPN. Co-beneficiary: TURCEV.

- **INTERREG POSBEMED2 (2019-2022):** This project was funded under the Testing and Capitalising phase of InterregMED projects, as a continuation of the POSBEMED project, with the specific objective to maintain biodiversity and natural ecosystems through strengthening the management and networking of protected areas. The objective of POSBEMED2 was to manage the Mediterranean coastline by developing planning strategies that recognize the value of the Posidonia-beach-dune environment and integrate them into the overall coastal strategy, while also addressing concerns and educating stakeholders. It further addressed key knowledge gaps, providing information that will enhance management decisions on adaptation, policies, planning and promotion in PAs. The project aimed to: exchange experiences; test and demonstrate new management solutions and approaches of banquette management in at least 11 coastal PA sites; test a local governance framework for decision making on *Posidonia* banquettes; identify and implement different management interventions and actions; create the baseline for a common transnational monitoring programme that will further explore the use of advanced technologies; increase local stakeholder involvement through capacity trainings for key groups; raise awareness of a wider audiences and promote behavioural and policy changes for improved coastal PAs and local government policies. Coordinator: Autonomous Region of Sardinia. Co-beneficiaries: HSPN and RCM (Greece) ENALIA (Cyprus), IUCN Med, CAIB Baleares, RS-PACA (Spain), IAS-CNR (Italy), Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region (France), NATURA JADERA (Croatia).
- **Project LIFE19 NAT/BG/001017 "LIFE for Lesser Kestrel" (2020-2025):** This 5-year project targets the Lesser Kestrel, included in Annex I of the Birds Directive and in the Ornis Committee list of priorities birds. The project's goals include the connection of all the subpopulations in Greece and Bulgaria, the expansion of the nesting distribution of the species through ensuring the continued existence of independent colonies and an overall improvement of the species' status in the South-East Balkans. It will aid the



propagation of the birds in a wider area and will improve the conditions for future natural recolonization of other areas from restored/established colonies. Key objectives are: to halt the decline and improve the species conservation status not only in Bulgaria and Greece (especially in NATURA 2000 sites), but also in the entire southeastern Balkans; to stabilize and strengthen the newly established Lesser Kestrel colony in Bulgaria; to assist the natural expansion and recolonization; to gather data and assist the conservation of the scattered colonies in different countries in the southeastern Balkans; to demonstrate and further encourage sustainable arable land management of key Lesser Kestrel foraging habitats; to replicate, further develop and improve the best reinforcement practices in Bulgaria and Greece, transferring experience of other EU countries and LIFE projects. Coordinating beneficiary: Green Balkans (Bulgaria). Co-beneficiaries: HSPN and University of Thessaly (Greece).

- **Project LIFE20 PRE/IT/000007 "NewLIFE4Drylands" (2021-2024):** This project aims to monitor the application, scalability and replication of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for restoration of degraded and desertified drylands. Using Remote Sensing techniques, the project will provide a framework and a protocol for: identifying dryland characteristics; identifying sustainable solutions that could be successfully implemented in degraded drylands, e.g., to improve vegetation cover and productivity in areas vulnerable to ongoing desertification; mid- and long-term monitoring of interventions in desertified lands, to better evaluate restoration effectiveness and improve sustainable soil management. The NbS protocol will be based on Remote Sensing methodologies, compensating for the lack of long-term, reliable and homogeneous local information, and providing a clear, specific and cost-free assessment of restoration processes, useful for further decision-making. Expected outputs include: a conceptual framework for achieving land degradation neutrality and combating desertification through NbS; a monitoring assessment framework; a restoration protocol based on NbS; a mid- and long-term monitoring model based on Remote Sensing; a monitoring report on 4 restored areas in Spain, Italy and Greece; a comparison of different grassland restoration techniques in Alta Murgia National Park; a Restoration Plan to implement NbS for Asterousia Mts, Greece and Alta Murgia, Italy. Coordinating beneficiary: CNR-IIA (Italy). Co-beneficiaries: ISPRA, University of Sapienza-DEB and CNR-IBE (Italy), CREAM (Spain), HSPN and University of Crete (Greece).
- **Horizon 2020 Project "GenB" (2022-2025):** This 30-month project aims to create the Bioeconomy Generation (GenB), which will be aware of and engaged in environmental issues, sustainability and circularity. Specific objectives include: co-creating innovative approaches, formats, materials and tools, through the cooperation between children, young adults, parents, teachers and other formal and non-formal education professionals, to provide educational and informational toolkits on bioeconomy in general and on bio-based sectors; raising awareness, interest and knowledge on the environmental, social and economic benefits of sustainable and circular bioeconomy and its sectors; contributing to the transition of the new generations towards more sustainable and circular behaviours, consumptions and lifestyles through their empowerment. Coordinator: Agency for the Promotion of the European Research



(Italy). Co-beneficiaries: HSPN and Q-PLAN (Greece), BTG (Netherlands), LOBA (Portugal), PEDAL (Slovakia), EUN (Belgium), ZSI (Austria), AIJU (Spain), FVA (Italy).

- **Project LIFE22 NAT/ES/101113584 “PHOENIX” (2023-2028):** This 5-year project aims to improve the conservation status of Priority Habitat “Palm groves of Phoenix” (9370*) in the Gran Canaria Islands and Crete. Only two species of native palms of genus *Phoenix* exist in Europe, *P. canariensis* and *P.theophrasti*, located at the Gran Canaria (Spain) and Crete (Greece) regions respectively. Their uniqueness justifies the designation as Priority Habitat. In both areas, the habitat faces severe threats, including climate change risks (wildfires, heatwaves), pests, invasive alien species (IAS), hybridization, overgrazing and visitors’ pressure (tourist activity). The project aims to provide strategic conservation action-lines for each of the threats identified in both countries, including several cross-cutting actions (e.g., habitat restoration and reforestation, governance, awareness raising) that will help minimise several threats simultaneously. Coordinator: Territorial and Environmental Management and Planning SA (Gesplan - Spain). Co-beneficiaries: HSPN, Ministry of Environment and Energy, University of Crete, and Gounaris N. and Kontos K. Ltd. (Greece), and Cabildo de Gran Canaria, General Directorate of Agriculture and Rural Development, and Institute of Agricultural Research of the Canary Islands (Spain).
- **HORIZON MSCA-2022-SE-01-01 “TOPIO” (2023-2027):** This 4-year project aims to give citizens an active role in landscape decision-making through citizen science, geoinformatics (earth observation and GIS), artificial intelligence and public participation, in order to promote the sustainable development of the region. TOPIO, is predominantly seeking to position landscape as a key concept for addressing broader challenges, within frameworks such as the Faro Convention Plan, the Aarhus Convention, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the EU Green Deal, etc. Secondly, to provide innovative, international, interdisciplinary, and cross-sectoral training for TOPIO partners, based on training and mobility activities, in a number of different disciplines. Further, to achieve advanced innovation and capacity building through the development of a research and training network, focusing on development, effective integration and increased exploitation of the existing and emerging landscape through monitoring techniques. Coordinator: Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas (FORTH - Greece). Co-beneficiaries: HSPN and Geosystems Hellas S.A. (Greece), NGO Association of the Instituto Superior Técnico para a Investigação e Desenvolvimento (Portugal), J&G ENGINEERING & ARCHITECTURE E. P.E. (Cyprus), University of Ghent (Belgium), University of Seville (Spain), GEO University of Tallinn (Estonia), University of Sapienza of Rome (Italy).
- **NSFR Project “Islands Olive Cultivation Protocol (IOCP)” (2023-2025):** This 4-year project aims to create an agricultural practices protocol for olive cultivation in island regions, specifically Lesvos and Crete (Greece). The goal is to contribute significantly towards more efficient use of irrigation water and to increase productivity by supporting the transition to a climate change resilient agriculture. The protocol, which will be implemented through the development of specific software, delivers a dual objective: the management of reduced reserves and low quality of irrigation water in



these island regions, while simultaneously addressing the reduced productivity in olive cultivation through the application of good agricultural practices. Coordinator: Hellenic Agricultural Organization "DEMETER" (HAO - DEMETER) - Institute of Olive, Subtropical Plants and Vine. Co-beneficiaries: HSPN, Institute of Soil and Water Resources (HAO - DEMETER), Union of Agricultural Cooperatives Meramballou S.A., SCIENTACT S.A., MODOUSA S.A., and Tepes Farm.

3. Environmental Education

Since 1995, the HSPN coordinates three international Environmental Education programmes, in the form of national Networks, approved by the Greek Ministry of Education. Some 500 schools at kindergarten, primary and secondary levels, throughout the country, participate in these networks every year, with thousands of students and teachers taking part. Active cooperation with the local communities is required, and the students through their action-based and place-based activities learn how to interact with and how to influence adults and officials of their communities. The HSPN produces all relevant educational materials for its programmes, with the voluntary assistance of experienced teachers specialised in Environmental Education and Education for Sustainable Development and distributes them free of charge to all participating schools. It also organizes training sessions for the teachers involved (see <http://eepf.gr/el/ekpaideusi>).

- **“Eco-Schools”** (FEE international programme). Each school studies problems that have to do with energy, water, waste management, resource conservation, etc., and comes up with practical solutions (see www.ecoschools.global, <http://ecoschools.gr/>).
- **“Young Reporters for the Environment”** (FEE international programme). The students analyse a serious environmental problem, usually one which concerns their local community, frequently in cooperation with students from other European countries. The students have to write up and present these themes, like reporters, and communicate them from one school to the other using the Internet. (see www.yre.global).
- **“Learning about Forests”** (FEE international programme). The students receive information about forests, their biological functioning and their uses, and practical applications of this knowledge are demonstrated. Students are then called on to implement what they have learnt, frequently in the forest itself (www.leaf.global).

4. Sustainable Management in the Tourism Sector

The HSPN is the national operator of FFE’s international programmes for sustainable management in the tourism sector, while promoting environmental education and awareness among the staff, the visitors and the local societies. These programmes also enhance the environmental image of Greece as a prime destination. Every year, the HSPN organises specialised training seminars for participants in the two programmes.

- **“Blue Flag”**. The HSPN has operated this programme in Greece since 1992, aiming at the ecological management of beaches, marinas and tourism boats. To receive the Blue Flag, all participating municipalities, hotels, marinas and boats must implement the



strict criteria which are required by this internationally acclaimed quality standard. These include, among others, excellent water quality, cleanliness, provision of life-saving and other facilities, the undertaking of educational activities related to marine and coastal habitats, the protection of the coastal area, and responsible behaviour around marine wildlife. In 2023, 617 beaches, 18 marinas and 6 Tourism Boats were awarded the Blue Flag, bringing Greece to the second place among the 48 countries participating in the programme globally (www.blueflag.gr).

- **“Green Key”**. The HSPN has operated this programme in Greece since 2009. It awards the “Green Key” eco-label to various enterprises in the hospitality industry that successfully meet the required strict environmental criteria, aiming to reduce the enterprises’ footprint and ensure sustainable use of resources. In 2023, 580 hotels have received the eco-label bringing Greece to the third place among the 67 countries participating in the programme globally (www.greenkey.gr).

5. Public Awareness Raising

a. Conferences, Seminars and Excursions

The HSPN organises local and national conferences, seminars and workshops on a variety of environmental subjects. Examples in recent years include:

- 2009: National Conference on “Our Natural Heritage; its Value and its Protection”.
- 2011: 3rd National Student Conference on “Human Values and the Environment – Some waste, others starve”.
- 2012: Special Conference to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of Directive 92/43/EEC.
- 2017: Special Conference to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the adoption of Directive 92/43/EEC.
- 2022: RUNNING OUT OF TIME relay. The Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature was responsible for the coordination of the Greek leg of the «Running Out of Time» Relay from 24 to 27 October 2022. It was the largest non-stop global relay to date, with the aim of raising awareness and mobilizing the public to tackle Climate Change. Its route, a total of 7,767 kilometers, started in Scotland, where the United Nations Conference on Climate Change COP26 took place, and ended at Sharm el-Skeikh, where COP27 followed.

Its main purpose was to transfer, contained in the baton, a message from the citizens and especially the younger generation to the world leaders and participants in COP27, about the need for of quality climate education for all, but also to raise awareness, inspire the world and strengthen local climate actions. The message was delivered on November 8, 2022, in a symbolic ceremony, to the Presidency of COP27, accompanied by more than 800,000 signatures of support, the voice of thousands of citizens who took part in the events in the 18 countries along the route and the voices of some 777,000 students from 105 countries who participated in the ROoT World Schools Day, implemented under the auspices of [UNESCO](http://www.unesco.org). The baton arrived in Greece through Lake Megali Prespa from Albania and, 755 km later arrived at the Marina of Flisvos in Faliro, to continue its journey to Cyprus by sea. The relay



was a unique example of the cooperation of all involved parties. The mass participation of runners and cyclists, the overwhelming response of all participants, especially schoolchildren, in the parallel actions along the route and the substantial coverage by the national and local media that embraced the action, contributed towards increased public awareness of the challenges created by climate change, but also to underlined the important initiatives and actions implemented throughout Greece.

Through the contribution of all participants and supporters, Greece was considered one of the most important stages of this global event. Among the participants were representatives of the political leadership, decentralized administration and local governments, the educational community including students, teachers and parents, businesses, non-governmental organizations, the Hellenic Police and the Fire Brigade, representatives of sports federations and clubs, Olympians and athletes, and members of civil society.

The Root relay was organized by the World Relay Ltd, a company with extensive experience in such events, in collaboration with the NGOs Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) and Carbon Copy.

You can review the relay in detail at: <https://www.eepf.gr/el/tomeis-drashs/erga-kai-programmata/running-out-of-time-project>

- 2023: PROTECTION OF NATURE LAB – Conference “CLIMATE ERA”. In the framework of its national strategy, as well as its wider cooperation with the Foundation for Environmental Education regarding the promotion of Quality Environmental Education for All, HSPN launched a series of climate educational activities for the public, the first of which was the “PROTECTION OF NATURE LAB”.

This first cycle started with 4 presentations on climate change issues, "Cities and Climate Change", "Climate Crisis and Health in the 21st Century", "Science and Policy", "Energy Transition and Renewable Energy Sources" and concluded with the half-day conference “CLIMATE ERA” on the role of climate education.

The conference included leading speakers from Greece and abroad, represented the sectors of education, civil society, business, innovation, media, science and tourism.

Stratos Fanaras, President and CEO of the survey company METRON ANALYSIS, presented the results of a survey carried out on behalf of HSPN on "Trends of society and citizens regarding the Climate Crisis in Greece and the World". The survey showed that the perception of the climate crisis at the global level is high but still vague, and not directly related to the effects and destruction of the natural environment at the national level. High rates of "climate stress" were also recorded. Mr. Fanaras emphasized that the climate crisis must be "a high political priority at global level".

Sarah Margono Samsudin, Senior Project Officer, Section of Education for Sustainable Development of UNESCO and Pramod Kumar Sharma, Senior Education Director of FEE, **presented for the first time in Greece** the new UN initiatives for the transformation of education, highlighting UNESCO's **Greening Education Partnership (GEP)** campaign to "green" schools, colleges and universities worldwide by 2030.

You can review the presentations and the conference in detail at: <https://www.eepf.gr/el/poiotiki-perivallontiki-ekpaideusi-gia-olous>



Hellenic Society
for the Protection
of Nature (HSPN)



The HSPN also organises seminars and other events on environmental subjects for the staff of large companies that want to meet the socially recognized goals of Corporate Social Responsibility.

It participates in events related to environmental issues, and organises educational excursions for its members and friends to all parts of the country, guided by experts in a number of fields such as botany, zoology, ornithology, etc. it also organises presentations and addresses for its members and the general public.

b. Journal, Publications and Website

The HSPN has continuously published the quarterly periodical "I FYSI" (Nature) since 1975. The periodical features articles on a variety of nature and wildlife subjects and conservation issues, as well as reports on the Society's activities. It also publishes many books on nature subjects, informative material and newsletters about its educational programmes and other projects.

The HSPN details its activities and concerns on its website www.eepf.gr.

You can also find visual material on its YouTube channel youtube.com/user/eepfgr

The Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature (HSPN)

Nikis 20, Athens 105 57

Tel 210 331 4563

e-mail: info@eepf.gr



Hellenic Society
for the Protection
of Nature (HSPN)

