



THE BALEARIC SEA: A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY



A YEAR OF LEGISLATURE: MILESTONES AND DUTIES WITH THE SEA

PHOTO: EDUARDOALCANIZ



by Aniol Esteban

This July marks the first year of the legislature led by Margalida Prohens. If we take stock of these 12 months looking towards the sea and the attention that has been given to the commitments of the Balearic Blue Deal, we have reasons to both cheer and chide their actions, or lack thereof.

Their first success was the implementation of the Co-Management Commission for Recreational Fishing. Linking this group with the conservation of the marine environment has created a welcome space for dialogue.

Another action we applaud is the unification of the regulations governing fishing and shellfishing in the Natura 2000 network areas. Clear and unified regulations can improve the effectiveness of these areas, which are the main instruments for nature conservation in the European Union.

In addition, despite the need for more resources, they fought a determined fight against illegal fishing, a practice that endangers our marine resources and the sustainability of local fishing communities.

Continued investment in infrastructure to improve water quality is perhaps the strongest point of this first year of the legislature. Maintaining attention on this aspect is vital not only for marine life but also for human health and economic activities that depend

on the sea.

We also find remarkable their receptiveness to advance the protection of sharks and rays, essential species for the balance of marine biodiversity, as well as their willingness to create working spaces to conserve the shallow bays, crucial

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habitats for many species that act as breeding and feeding grounds.

But it is not all good news.

The most worrying aspect is their lack of attention to the high protection of the sea. There is value in creating areas closed to fishing to be able to fish more and better around them. The legislature started with 55km² closed to fishing, i.e. 1.7% of inland waters, as shown in the study by Dr. Natàlia Barrientos. But in all of this, the legislature's first year in office, not a single square kilometre of high protection has been created. Neither have they expressed the will to advance the creation of marine sanctuaries, an essential step for the regeneration of ecosystems and the preservation of marine biodiversity.

Not only has no progress been made on high protection, they reallocated a €1.44m Next Generation Fund that were destined to create a proposal for marine sanctuaries and a work plan for the conservation of shallow bays. This significant decision could be a mistake if the govern-

ment corrects it in the next budget.

Furthermore, the lack of a clear timetable for drawing up the management plans for the pending marine Natura 2000 areas is a serious shortcoming. Without dates and a public commitment in this regard, it will be practically impossible to have them completed during this legislature.

Another negative point is their silence on the implementation of new monitoring plans for habitats and species, an issue that has very few resources and needs much more attention. Without a good monitoring system and stable funding, it is not possible to evaluate the effectiveness of conservation policies and adjust them according to the real needs of marine ecosystems.

Also disappointing is their lack of response to the Balearic Blue Deal, despite Parliament's request. Ignoring this roadmap with concrete actions and broad social, economic, and political support indicates a lack of commitment to conservation initiatives driven by civil society and experts.

Taking the Balearic Blue Deal as a reference, this first year of the legislature has been a rather disappointing period in terms of giving the Balearic marine and coastal environment the attention it deserves. Although we celebrate the advances made and recognise that the Balearic Islands are in a good place compared to other autonomous communities of the Spanish coast and Mediterranean countries, it is a pity that this advantage is not being used to strengthen the leadership of our islands.



School NEWS

NEWS FROM QUEEN'S COLLEGE



In the last week of term the staff and pupils at Queen's College decided to celebrate a day of peace and kindness. The idea was to end the academic year remembering the values of kindness, respect and tolerance; to take these with us over the summer break and return in September holding them close to our hearts.

