

PRESS RELEASE
Athens, 27 January 2022

5,360 HELMEPA volunteers cleaned 130 km of coastline

Record of cleanups for HELMEPA, which in just two and a half months coordinated 196 cleanups all over Greece, covering 130 km of coastline, with the voluntary and active participation of 5,360 citizens.

The Hellenic Marine Environment Protection Association – HELMEPA in its capacity as the National Coordinator for the past 31 consecutive years, has successfully coordinated and implemented the International Coastal Cleanup 2021, which is the largest and most recognized campaign for marine pollution prevention.

Between 18 September and 30 November, HELMEPA's network of members and volunteers cleaned up a total length of 130 km of coastline, collecting **283,831 items** of total weight of **19,5 tons**. In addition to the practical value of waste collection and their proper disposal, the volunteers contributed to the scientific study of the problem, by recording the collected waste and thus providing valuable data on the amount, type, and origin of marine litter.

Cigarette ends along with single-use plastics, for yet another year, are placed in the first (negative) positions in the top10 list of marine litter found on Greek coasts. This type of litter is directly linked to leisure activities ashore and also our daily consumption habits that despite lasting only for a short period of time, remain on the beaches and seabed for many years, posing a serious threat to marine animals and birds.

Since 2020, the trash data forms used by volunteers have been adapted, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, to include waste related to **personal protective equipment** (masks and disposable gloves). Masks and gloves are placed in the 17th position this year (3,112 items), a very high position if one considers that these products have entered our lives in large quantities in just the last 2 years. Thus, a new environmental challenge emerges for the proper management of these products that we extensively use in our daily lives, as they are important for our health and safety, but end up so easily in the natural and marine environment, when we throw them carelessly on the streets or "escape" from full rubbish bins. You can read [here](#) Ocean Conservancy Report "Pandemic Pollution: The Rising Tide of Plastic PPE".

The new generation actively joined this year's campaign, along with the noteworthy involvement of the Educational Community. Students and teachers from

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HELLENIC MARINE ENVIRONMENT
PROTECTION ASSOCIATION

MARITIME TRAINING CENTER
for Pollution Prevention
Safety at Sea and
Environmental Awareness Certified by



1982-2022
40
years
Voluntary Commitment
To Save the Seas

Kindergartens, Primary, High Schools and Lyceums of the country, as well as young people (aged 15 and over) members of HELMEPA's "Youth Ambassadors" network participated and responded to the call of immediate action on protection and sustainability of the marine and coastal environment.

The shipping community, especially HELMEPA's member-companies, as well as other corporations and organizations performed cleanup activities, underlining the high level of Corporate Social Responsibility. Municipalities, Port Authorities, Associations, and citizens also sent their own distinct message, thus empowering the local communities, and highlighting the individual and collective effort for pollution prevention.

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INTERNATIONAL COASTAL CLEANUP
September - November 2021





196
coastal and
underwater cleanups



5,360
volunteers



130 km
of coastline
cleaned



19,5 tons
of marine litter
collected

PARTICIPATION

55 Companies	101 Schools	14 Associations
11 Educational Organizations	9 Municipalities	4 Port Authorities

TOP 10 ITEMS OF MARINE LITTER

Cigarette butts	73,329
Plastic pieces	50,140
Plastic bottle caps	20,949
Straws	20,072
Plastic bags and pieces	11,183
Single use plastic cups and lids	11,095
Plastic bottles	9,982
Paper pieces	8,866
Glass bottles & pieces	7,586
Foam pieces	6,790

TOTAL
283,831
items collected





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