**Hellenic Republic**



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**PRESS RELEASE**

**A significant distinction achieved by the scientific group of the Agricultural University of Athens at the final competition of the 1st HACKATHON of the EU-CONEXUS-RFS “Smart4Coast”.**

On Friday, February 3 2023, the first HACKATHON of the European University EU-CONEXUS-RFS “Smart4Coast” took place in Zadar Croatia. *Smart4Coast* is an open call to scientists from various research fields and PhD students dealing with urban coastal issues. The teams that participated in Hackathon had been invited to tackle major challenges that these areas are facing today, due to the consequences of climate change and dense population. Within almost three days, the participating teams were producing innovative solutions, inasmuch developing a more cutting-edge approach towards the resolution of certain current problems.

 The topics of the competition involved sea protection, tourism, climate and water challenges, mobility and smart city. During the event, the participants were taking part in workshops that allowed them to move from an idea to a product or a project. They were also sharing their knowledge with professionals, in addition to meeting peer researchers from other partner Universities of EU-CONEXUS.

The research team that has represented the Agricultural University of Athens, entitled *BioSEAsoristas*, composed of Ms Sophie Mavrikou, Assistant Professor of the Department of Biotechnology, Ms Anastasia- Marina Palaiogeorgou, a Post - doctoral Researcher, Ms Vasiliki Iris Perivolidi, a PhD Candidate and Mr Georgios-Marios Papaioannou, a Post - graduate Student, has distinguished itself by being placed second through the business idea for the development of biosensors, which detect microplastics into the seas and oceans.

Microplastics form microscopic particles invading food chain, having also been detected in tissues of marine and terrestrial organisms with adverse impacts on ecosystems and human health, too. The innovative technology presented can serve as a tool of initial assessment for the massive and rapid quantification of microplastics in environments of remote areas with restricted access to costly technological equipment, besides enabling the possibility of monitoring the microplastics concentration. In total, simplicity and accessibility of that method shall lead to more controls over environmental samples, which could accelerate the implementation of the legislative agenda upon measures aiming at the deceleration in the contamination caused by microplastics.

The Alliance of the European Universities [EU-CONEXUS](http://www.eu-conexus.eu), into which the [Agricultural University of Athens](https://www2.aua.gr/en) has been participating along with other nine (9) Universities, forms a transnational European University of Higher Education and Research that pertains to the Smart Urban Coastal Zone Sustainability from a global perspective. The following Universities have been participating as partners at EU-CONEXUS:

* [La Rochelle Université](https://www.univ-larochelle.fr/) (France)
* [Agricultural University of Athens](https://www2.aua.gr/en) (Greece)
* [Technical University of Civil Engineering Bucharest](https://utcb.ro/en/) (Romania)
* [Klaipeda University](https://www.ku.lt/en/) (Lithouania)
* [Universidad Católica de Valencia “San Vicente Mártir](https://www.ucv.es/eng/home)” (Spain)
* [University of Zadar](https://www.unizd.hr/eng/) (Croatia)
* [Frederick University](https://ucert.frederickuniversity.gr/) (Cyprus)
* [Waterford Institute of Technology](https://www.wit.ie/) (Ireland)
* [University of Rostock](https://www.uni-rostock.de/en/) (Germany).

 For more info about the EU-CONEXUS Consortium, all the interested parties can visit the pertinent link <https://www.eu-conexus.eu/en/>