



Key-note Theme 1

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Science-Based Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) in the Balearic Islands
(Western Mediterranean)

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The preservation, restoration and science based management of the coastal zone requires a comprehensive understanding of the multidisciplinary processes and their interactions that affect the natural variability of the eco-system. This requires a strong state of the art backing from the natural and earth sciences. However, while understanding disciplinary biological, physical and chemical factors in the coastal environment represents a significant challenge to the implementation of ICZM, in reality, it is the social-economic-political system behind the impacts and the management of these areas that, more often than not, is the limiting factor to conservation and restoration. In addition, there exists a deficiency of multi-disciplinary research to build our understanding of the interrelationship among the natural, physical and social realms. Humans appear to be far less predictable than ecosystems. They require, among others, incentives, legislation, enforcement, and awareness in order to change their behavior. Understanding the processes that govern the actions and choices of humans and how those elements affect natural resources is essential to the conservation of coastal habitats. This reality is especially relevant in the Balearic Islands, one of the most significant tourism destinations in the Mediterranean region. Since 2005, the IMEDEA, an internationally well established research center, is working together with the Government of the Balearic Islands towards implementing science-based ICZM in the archipelago. The challenges associated with the transfer of updated scientific information (variables, indicators, natural ranges of variability, thresholds, etc.) in meaningful formats to policy makers and of finding a balance between the natural and social sciences are inherent in this process. The objective of this presentation will be to present the experiences of IMEDEA related to maintaining this critical, often evasive balance between scientific and socio-political realities.