



## POSIDONIA SEA TOURISM FORUM CEMENTS POSITION AS LEADING SEA TOURISM EVENT FOR EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

The Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum, which was held in Thessaloniki for the first time, is expected to stimulate further cruise growth in the region thanks to its insightful panel discussions, informative presentations and educational seminars delivered by a total of 56 speakers from the global cruise industry, who joined over **600 participants, 40 exhibitors and 50 journalists** at the Makedonia Palace hotel from 25 to 26 April.

The presence and active participation of C-level representatives **from 13 of the world's leading cruise lines** and the heads of the industry's international associations, as well as all the local stakeholders, emphasised the importance of the event in the biennial calendar of the international cruise industry, further cementing its credentials as the leading sea tourism Forum for the Eastern Mediterranean region.

The Forum was opened by a keynote speech delivered by **Mr Pierfrancesco Vago, Global Chairman of CLIA and Executive Chairman of MSC Cruises**. In the keynote, Mr Vago revealed an action plan for sustainable growth that emphasised the need to invest in infrastructure to maintain smooth operations and enhance the attractiveness of Greece as a cruise hub.

"After three years of reduced operations, 2023 is when we return to our pre-pandemic growth trajectory. We expect up to 33 million cruise passengers worldwide, exceeding 2019 volumes by over 11%. And when it comes to the East Med, cruise ships from all brands are coming back ahead of the summer season. Greece now has an extraordinary opportunity to strengthen its position as a cruise hub in the region and today I will outline the key actions to achieve this. Having developed its homeporting capabilities, the priority now is for ports, cruise operators and authorities to work together to create the right infrastructure and operating environment for the long-term".

The key actions proposed are working together to: promote new destinations, create the right port infrastructure and operating environment, develop sustainable tourism practices, introduce onshore solutions to match environmental technologies deployed onboard and support development of new fuels, and build the skills of the next generation of seafarers.

Thessaloniki's rise as a cruising destination was underscored by **Mayor Konstantinos Zervas**, who addressed delegates on the first day of the event. He highlighted the city's expected growth in cruise tourism, with 67 arrivals scheduled for 2023, from 13 different companies and 21 different cruise ships, and the inclusion of Thessaloniki in leading cruise companies' itineraries.

The ambition to establish Thessaloniki as a quality MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions) destination was supported by **Apostolos Tzitzikostas, Governor of the Region of Central Macedonia**, who invited the organisers of PSTF to establish Thessaloniki as the event's permanent host.

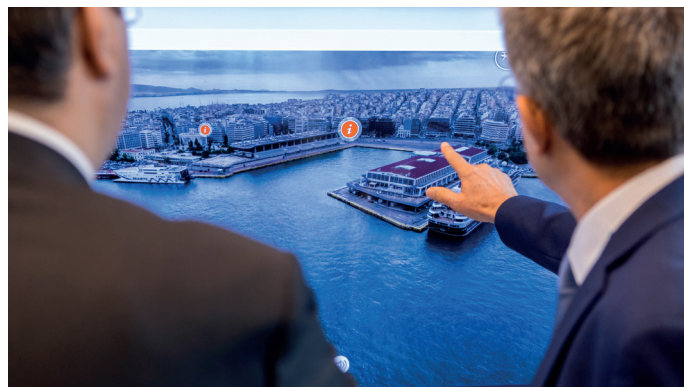


From L to R: Konstantinos Zervas, Mayor of Thessaloniki, Pierfrancesco Vago, Global Chairman of CLIA & Executive Chairman of MSC Cruises, Apostolos Tzitzikostas, Governor of Central Macedonia, Athanasios Liagkos, Executive Chairman of the BoD & Managing Director, ThPA SA - Port of Thessaloniki

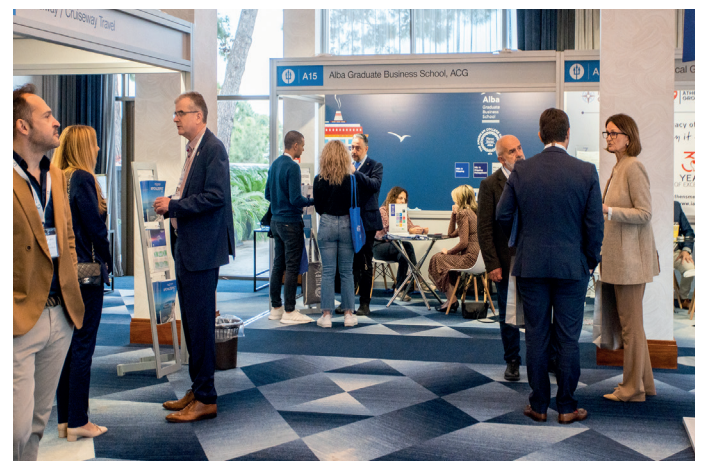


From L to R: Yu Zenggang, Chairman, Piraeus Port Authority SA, Chris Theophilides, CEO, Celestyal, Wybcke Meier, CEO, TUI Cruises GmbH, Marie-Caroline Laurent, Director General, CLIA Europe, Figen Ayan, President, MedCruise, Grant Holmes, Global Sector Head, Cruise & Superyacht Industry, Inchcape Shipping Services

**According to Athanasios Liagkos, Executive Chairman of the BoD & Managing Director of ThPA SA - Port of Thessaloniki:** “The Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum in Thessaloniki was a great success for two main reasons: firstly, cruise industry attendance was great both in terms of numbers and quality of participants and speakers who were exceptional, with many senior figures sharing their views and insights on the growth potential of the sector in the East Med region. Secondly, the conference shed light on the need to unearth and explore the potential of lesser-known destinations as alternative ports of call for the luxury segment and the realisation that Greece holds a great advantage in this respect with the many secret gems spread across its unique archipelagos.”



**Theodore Vokos, Managing Director of Posidonia Exhibitions SA, said:** “We spent two very productive, insightful and full of action days in a colourful and exciting city full with promise and potential to become a popular sea tourism hub in a region that is rightful in its ambition to expect great things. Thanks to PSTF, Greece had once again the opportunity to welcome the most influential and powerful decision-makers from the global cruise industry together with hundreds of industry professionals to meet in person, network, learn, establish partnerships and conduct business.”



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