



## Obituary: Nomiki (Mika) Simboura (1963-2020)

On the last days of 2020, Mika Simboura, our colleague, friend, student and mentor, Director of Research at the Institute of Oceanography of the Hellenic Center for Marine Research (HCMR) passed away.

Mika was born in Athens in 1963. Since childhood, she spent several summers on Andros island, where her curiosity and love for the marine environment began. She received her BSc in Biology (1984), her MSc in Biological Oceanography (1988) and her PhD (1995) in Marine Biology from the University of Athens. In 1988 she was employed by HCMR originally as a research fellow, where later she became the head of the Zoobenthos Laboratory. Her dedication and hard work for almost three decades, has left us with a remarkable heritage in taxonomy and ecology.

Her PhD thesis was focused on the systematics, ecology and zoogeography of Polychaeta. It was among the first major contributions to our current knowledge of polychaete diversity in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, adding a substantial number of species to the regional faunal inventory. Throughout her career, she continued to clarify taxonomic confusion, compile species catalogues, record non-indigenous species, study ecological preferences, ecological patterns and processes under disturbance.

Besides taxonomy, her expertise on benthic ecology and her tireless production of data, offered over the years valuable information in several scientific fields, such as anthropogenic impact studies, benthic habitat mapping and environmental conservation. She participated in the monitoring of most of the important

pollution incidents in the Greek Seas and spotlighted the observed impacts on the benthos. She was coordinator or responsible of sub-tasks for over 120 national and international scientific projects, through which she earned the respect of her colleagues, made strong friendships and built collaboration between the HCMR and many foreign institutes. At the same time, Mika produced a plethora of peer-reviewed publications, book chapters and conference presentations, which enhanced our understanding of the response of benthos to human pressures and the efficiency of the available indices and monitoring tools.

Her work has led to the development of the biotic index "BENTIX", which was chosen as the official metric used in Greece and Cyprus for estimating Ecological Quality Status of benthic ecosystems, but has also been applied in several ecological studies around the globe. Another of her major contributions to the marine research of Greece was the co-planning and subsequent supervision of the first National Monitoring Network for the implementation of Water Framework Directive. This network was unprecedented in terms of geographical extend and monitoring frequency for Greek standards at that time and it still offers a valuable timeline of data that can answer a variety of scientific questions.

Her valuable heritage will live on through the younger scientists from Greece and abroad who had the opportunity to collaborate with her. She was always willing to openly share her knowledge with students or colleagues and support her team members. She was always there with her smile, in both our happy or sad moments, creating memories that we will always cherish.

Mika had unlimited love to offer to the world and was often volunteering to aid people or animals in need. She had a great interest in arts and literature, her sculptures from sea-washed materials were presented in two art exhibitions and she recently became a columnist of

creative writing in a major Greek newspaper. Mika is survived by her much-loved son, Anastasis.

She will be always fondly remembered.

#### Her friends and collaborators

*Katsiaras Nikolaos, Aktan Turan Yelda, Anagnostou Christos, Androni Afroditi, Apostolaki Eugenia, Arvanitakis George, Arvanitidis Christos, Assimakopoulou Georgia, Bianchi Carlo Nike, Bilecenoglu Murat, Bray Laura, Catsiki Vassiliki Angelique (Tzela), Chatzinaki Maria, Christou Epaminondas, Çınar Melih Ertan, Corsini-Foka Maria, Crocetta Fabio, Diliberto Santi, Dragicevic Branko, Faulwetter Sarah, Frangou Stavroula, Georgiou Panos, Gerakaris Vasilis, Gerovasileiou Vasilis, Giannakourou Antonia, Giannoudi Louisa, Gücü Ali Cemal, Hatiris Giorgos-Angelos, Hatzianestis Ioannis, Iliakis Stelios, Iona Sissy, Issaris Yiannis, Kaberi Helen, Kambouri Georgia, Kanellopoulos Theodore D., Karachle Paraskevi, Karageorgis Aris, Karagevrekis Pelopidas, Karakassis Ioannis, Kassis Dimitris, Katsanevakis Stelios, Kioroglou Sotiris, Konstantinopoulou Aggeliki, Kouerinis Nikos, Kozanoglou Caterina, Krasakopoulou Eva, Kytinou Eleni, Lampadariou Nikolaos, Lange-neck Joachim, Louzidou Vivian, Loukaidi Vassiliki, Lykiardopoulos Aggelos, Manta Kyriaki, Mavriki Anna, Michalopoulos Panagiotis, Morri Carla, Naletaki Maria, Nicolaïdou Artemis, Orfanidis Sotiris, Pagou Kalliopi, Panayotidis Panayotis, Pancucci-Papadopoulou Antonella, Papadopoulos Vassilis, Papadopoulou Nadia, Paphanassiou Vangelis, Pappa Filothei, Pappas Georgios, Parinos Constantine, Patiris Dionisis, Patsourakou Aikaterini, Pavlakis Petros, Pavlidou Alexandra, Petihakis George, Pitta Paraskevi, Pollani Annika, Prospathopoulos Aristides, Psarra Stella, Reizopoulou Sofia, Renieris Panos, Rousakis Grigoris, Rousselaki Eleni, Sakkariou Dimitris, Salomidi Maria, Sevastou Katerina, Serena Fabrizio, Sigala Kalliopi, Siokou Ioanna, Smith Chris, Soukissian Takvor, Souvermezoglou Katerina, Stavrakakis Spyros, Streftaris Nikos, Strogyloudi Evangelia, Thessalou-Legaki Maria, Triantafyllou George, Triantaphyllidis George, Tsangaris Catherine, Tsapakis Manolis, Tsiamis Konstantinos, Tzempelikou Eleni, Tzovara Erietta, Vassilopoulou Celia, Velaoras Dimitris, Voutsinas Emanuela, Zachioti Panagiota, Zenetos Argyro, Zeri Christina, Zervoudaki Sultana.*