GSIS 2026
Global Sustainable Islands Summit

Island Innovation

Cabildo de Gran Canaria

# Global Sustainable Islands Summit 2026 External Impact Report



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# Executive Summary

The Global Sustainable Islands Summit (GSIS) 2026, held from 20–22 April in Gran Canaria, convened island leaders, practitioners, investors, researchers, and solution providers around a shared challenge: how to accelerate implementation of sustainable development solutions in island contexts.

Co-hosted with the Cabildo de Gran Canaria and organised by Island Innovation, the summit brought together stakeholders from across regions to address interconnected priorities, including energy transition, climate resilience, water security, sustainable finance, circular economy, and blue economy development.

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# Executive Summary

Across three days, GSIS 2026 focused not only on exchanging ideas but on bridging the gap between ambition and delivery. Discussions centred on practical pathways for implementation, from climate finance mechanisms and resilient infrastructure to island energy systems and innovation partnerships. A recurring theme throughout the summit was the importance of cross-sector collaboration and Island-to-Island exchange in adapting solutions to the realities of island territories.

**GSIS is internationally renowned for addressing sustainable development in island communities.**

***Costas Kadis***
*Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans, European Commission*





# Key Figures




# 500 Attendees



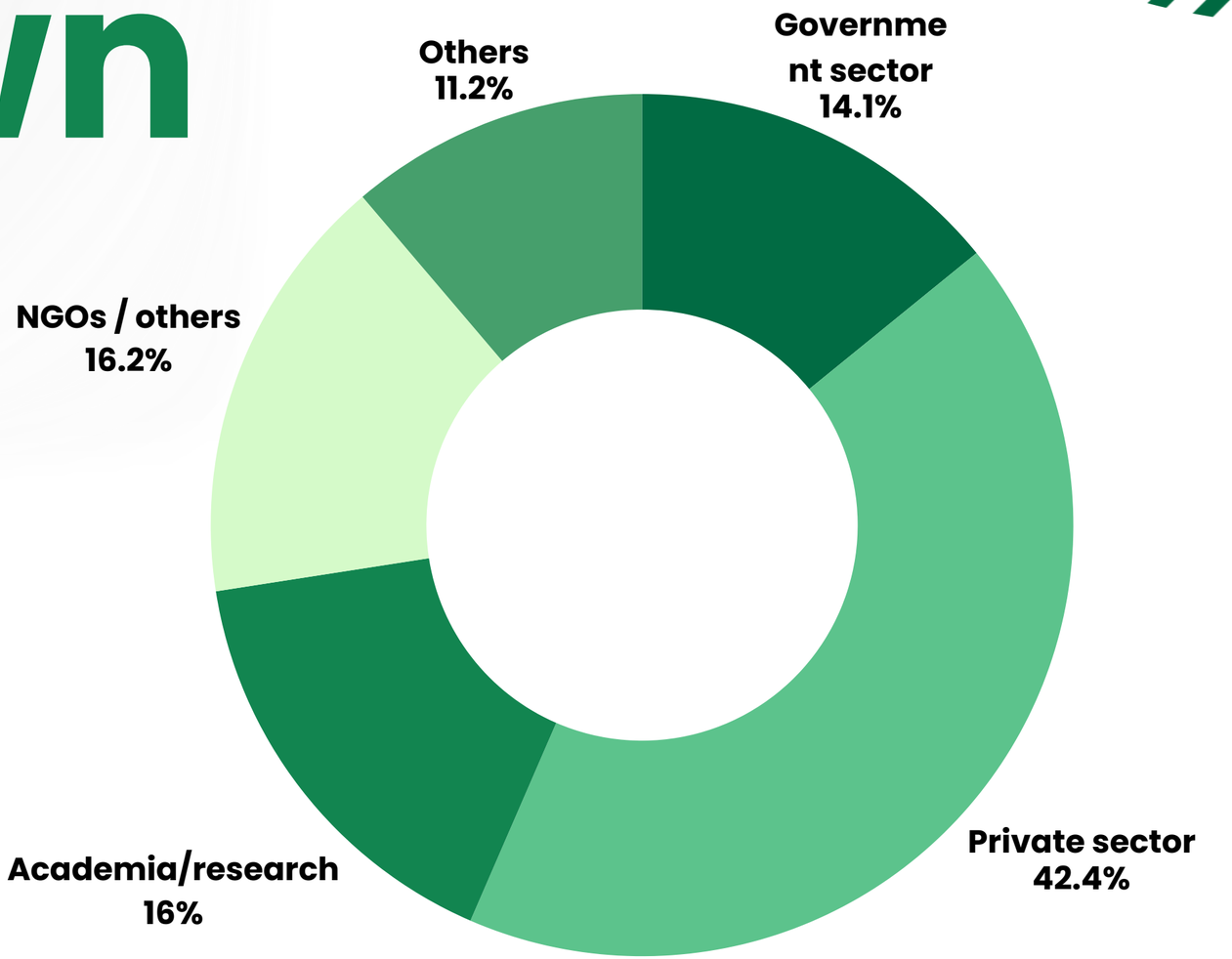

# 11.9

# Sponsors, Partners & Media

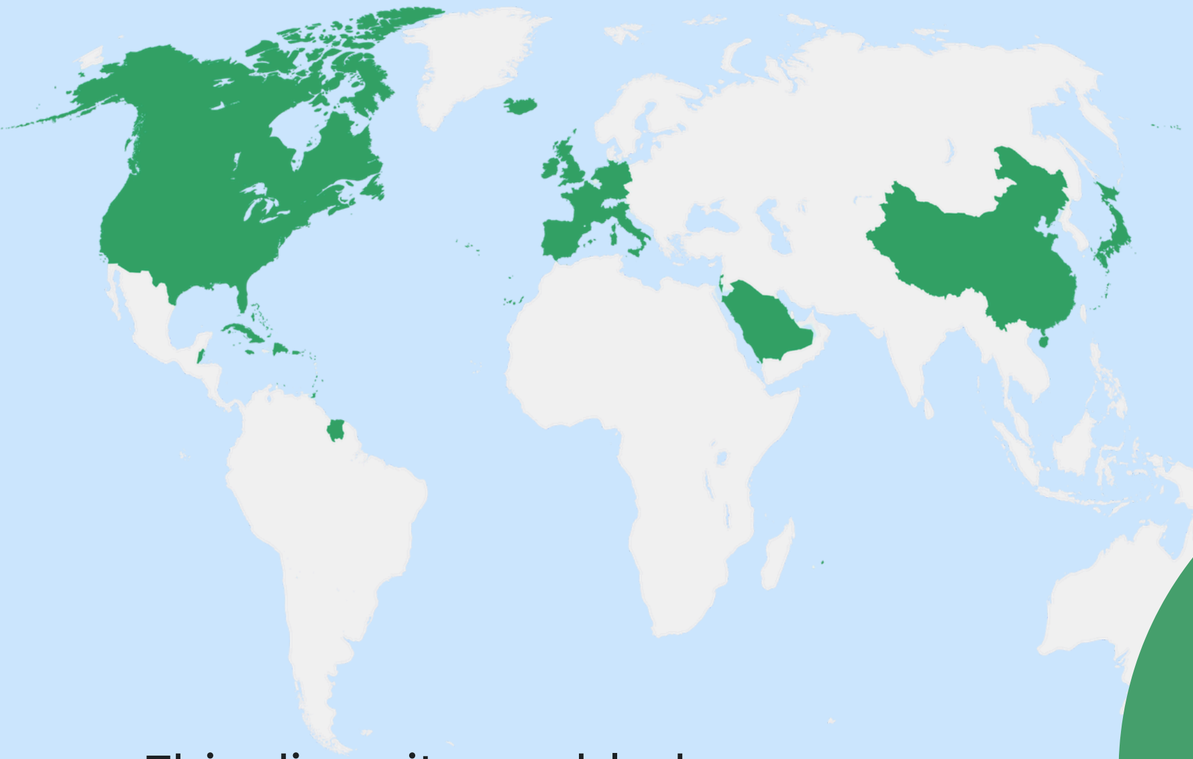

100
Speakers
GSIS 2026

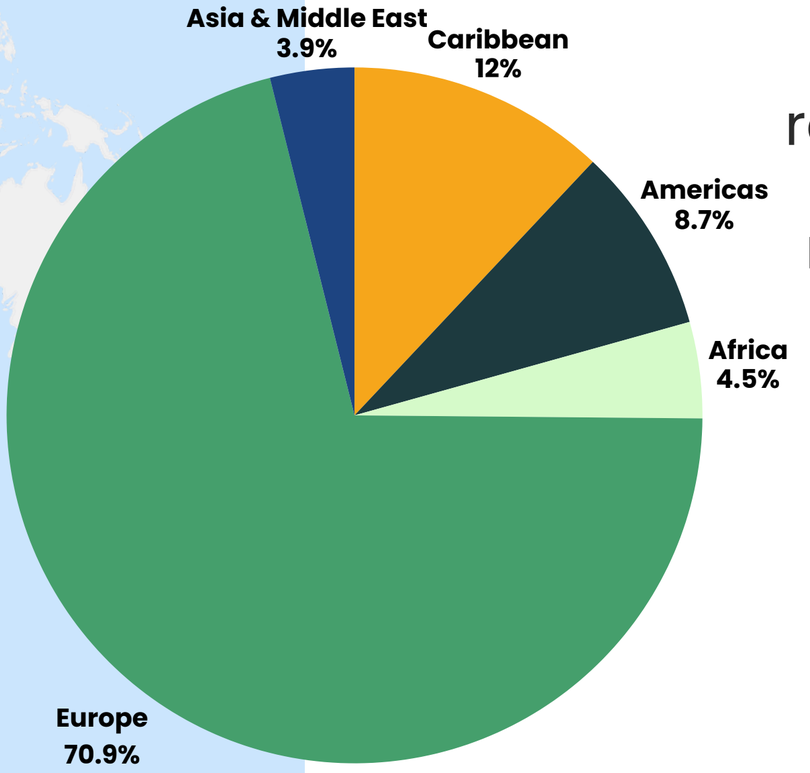
# Audience Breakdown





# Geographic Distribution






**67 countries & territories** were represented at the GSIS 2026 reflecting a highly international and cross-regional audience

This diversity enabled exchange between regions facing shared structural challenges, including energy isolation, climate vulnerability, and resource constraints.

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# Audience Profile

GSIS convenes a **multi-sector, decision-making audience.**

Participants included:

- National and regional governments
- International organisations and development banks
- Energy and infrastructure companies
- Research institutions and universities
- NGOs and foundations
- Startups and solution providers





# Programme

GSIS 2026
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# Programme Overview

The GSIS 2026 programme was structured to balance policy dialogue, technical exchange, and applied solutions.

Key components included:

- Plenary sessions and high-level panels
- Thematic discussions across energy, climate, water, and the economy
- Side events focused on specific sectors and regions
- Solutions Showcase sessions
- Field visits to local projects in Gran Canaria

1

### Resilient Island Energy Systems

Pioneering microgrids, pumped hydro and storage integration, offshore wind, affordability and community-scale energy planning and renewable solutions from islands leading the transition

2

### Ocean, Blue Economy & Maritime Innovation

Maritime governance, offshore wind, shipping innovation, marine renewables, sustainable fisheries, aquaculture, and spatial planning from ocean-dependent jurisdictions

3

### Circular Economy & Sustainable Tourism

Marine biomass innovation, blue bioeconomy, circular and sustainable tourism, tourism waste valorisation, algae cultivation, and integrated resource recovery, transforming ocean and land constraints into opportunities.

4

### Building Capacity: Talent, Technology & Institutional Innovation

Digital government, workforce development, diaspora engagement, youth pathways into green jobs, participatory governance, and institutional strategies multiplying impact in small jurisdictions

5

### Climate Adaptation, Biodiversity & Natural Area Management

Nature-based solutions, community science, ecosystem restoration, and adaptation where ocean and climate impacts demand immediate action

6

### Mobilising Finance for Sustainable Economic Development

EU institutional funding and consortia for outermost regions and sub-national island jurisdictions, climate fund navigation, philanthropic partnerships, blended finance, local trust funds and investment-readiness for island SMEs.


44
Sessions




# 5 Field Trips


21
Solutions
Presented
Blue-Tech Innovation Showcase
WINNER
Event information


Media &
Communications

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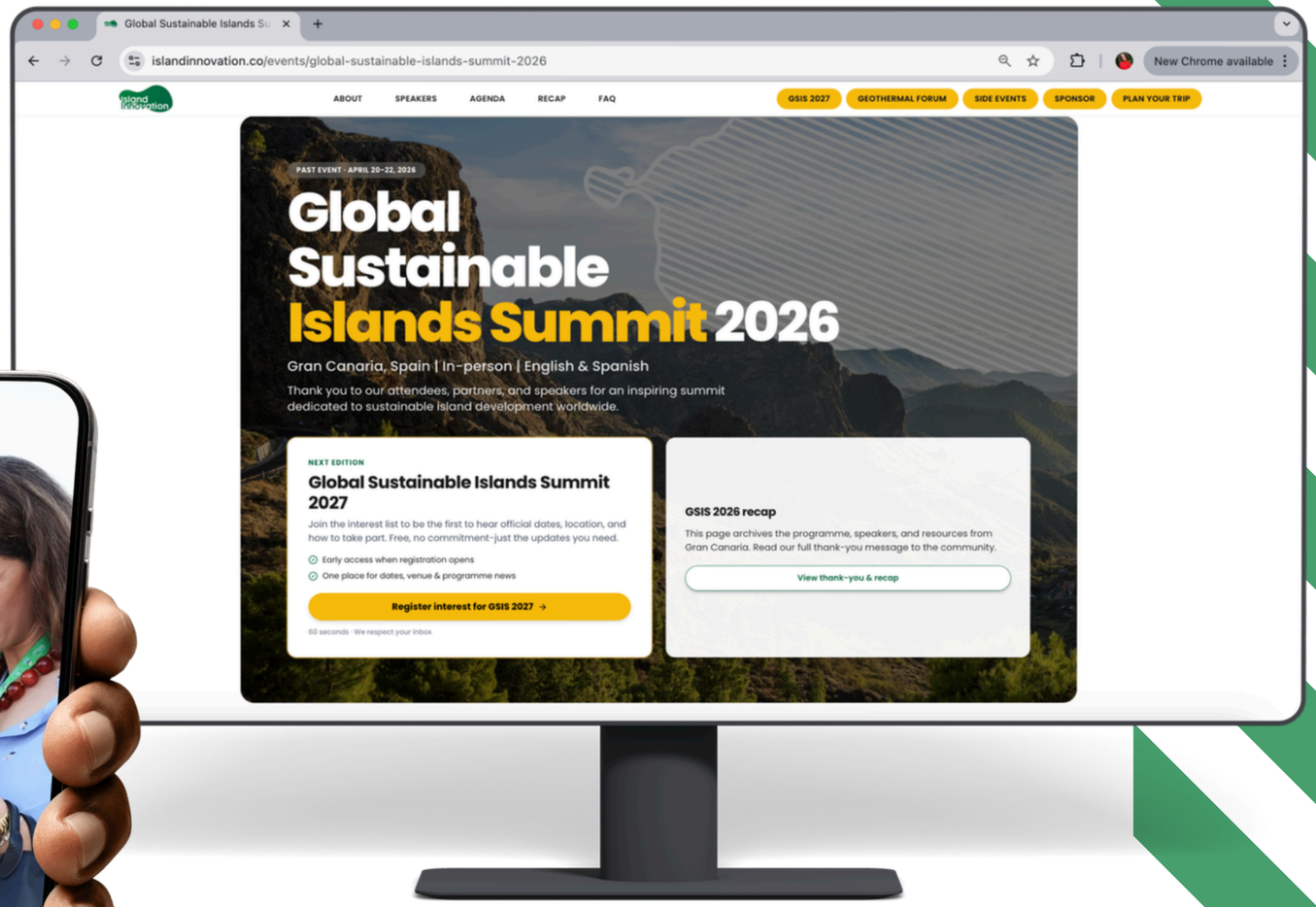
# 160K+
## Social Media Impressions






# 68,000+
## Website Visitors


80+
Press Hits




# 184

## Registered Networking App Users

# 272 Booked Networking App Meetings



# Networking App Marketplace Items

# 76





# Event Highlights

# Field Trips



## Island-to-Island exchange in practice

GSIS 2026 began with a series of visits across Gran Canaria, offering insight into how different challenges are being addressed on the ground. Field visits created a direct link between strategy and implementation, allowing participants to see how island solutions operate in practice and what it takes to make them work.




# Major initiative launches and announcements

GSIS provided a platform for significant announcements, including the launch of the Virgin Islands Climate Change Trust Fund with USD 5.5 million in seed funding, a governance structure in place, and first calls for proposals expected later this year.

This is exactly what GSIS is for: bringing together the policy, finance, and institutional actors who can turn diagnosis into delivery.

# Spotlight on island-specific solutions

GSIS 2026 highlighted the role of innovation in advancing practical solutions for island contexts through dedicated showcase formats focused on implementation and scale.
The Blue-Tech Innovation Showcase, delivered in partnership with the MED-Hubs Initiative, brought forward a diverse range of solutions supporting the sustainable development of marine and coastal economies.

Complementing this, the Solution Spotlight: Energy & Circularity focused on emerging solutions advancing resource efficiency, waste reduction, and sustainable energy systems.



Dedicated partnership-building sessions, including the EU Funding Matchmaking Lab and closed-door roundtables, created opportunities for collaboration around project development, investment, and consortia formation.

# Strategic Partnerships & Matchmaking






# Testimonials

**Alessandro Silvestri**
MALTAccelerate

MALTAccelerate, together with the MED-Hubs consortium, would like to extend the sincerest congratulations for the GSIS2026. Planning and implementation ran very smoothly; the professionalism and support from the entire Island Innovation team (including the volunteers) were amazing before and during the event.

**Godfrey Baldacchino**
University of Malta

I believe Island Innovation to be the most significant island-to-island development in the last decade

# Testimonials

**David Gumbs**
Director, RMI

I truly appreciated the opportunity to collaborate with Island Innovation. I really enjoyed the conference and meeting you and the team in person. I look forward to following up with the Island Innovation team and exploring ways we can continue to collaborate in support of island communities.

**Debbie Thomas**
Responsible Islands, Canary Islands

Island Innovation really pulled off a fantastic event at ExpoMeloneras! Everything ran smoothly, and it was clear how much effort went into the preparation. You brought together an impressive crowd, honestly beyond expectations. From experience, I know how much goes into planning, adapting, and keeping things on track, so kudos!






# Looking Ahead

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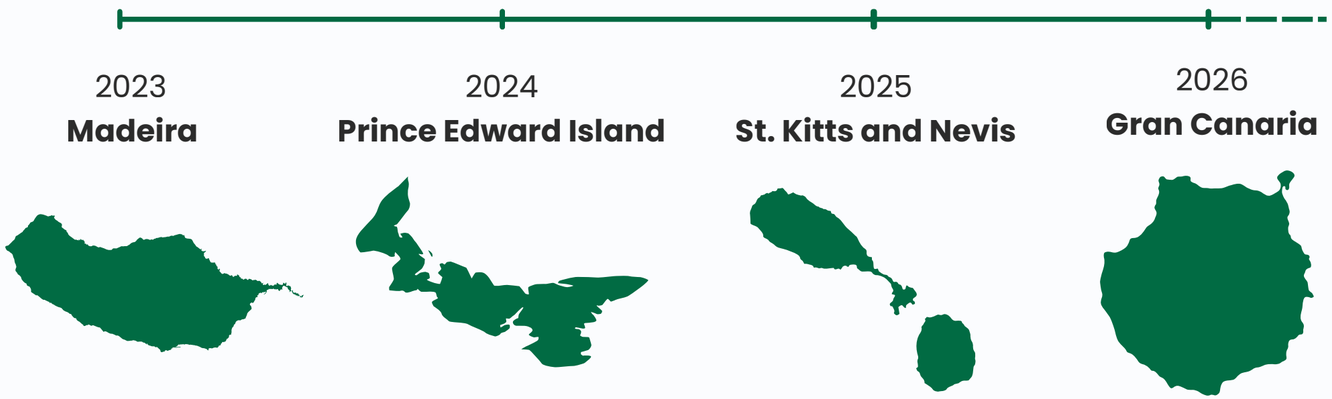
# Looking Ahead

The next edition will build on this foundation, expanding participation and strengthening its role in the global island sustainability agenda.




## Global Sustainable Island Summit 2027

**SIGN UP**

**Register your Interest NOW**

**500+**
Projected Attendees

GSIS 2026
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# Sponsor Visibility & Value

Sponsors and partners benefited from:

- Brand visibility across event materials and digital channels
- Speaking and participation opportunities
- Exhibition presence
- Direct engagement with target stakeholders
- Inclusion in communications and media coverage










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# Sponsors

## PLATINUM

Cabildo de Gran Canaria

## GOLD

GranCanaria

EDGE FOUNDATION CELEBRATING 20 YRS

Jointhepipe ISLAND WATER®

spegc Sociedad de Promoción Económica de Gran Canaria

## SILVER

MALTAccelerate

MED-HUBS

EUT+ Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena

INDOOR VERTICAL FARM

EWASTE

Energía Solar Canarias

prezero

CANARAGUA

## BRONZE

VENICE LAGOON PLASTIC FREE

alda European Association for Local Democracy

JUSTONEARTH

circ

AYAGAURES MEDIOAMBIENTE

BIOASIS GRAN CANARIA

BEST IN GRAN CANARIA

PURE ENERGY STREAM

Interreg North Sea Co-funded by the European Union FREIIA



# Strategic Partners








































Contact us to amplify your organization's presence at GSIS 2027
INTERESTED IN COLLABORATING?
Let's work together.
bizdev@islandinnovation.co
Reach out now!
Island Innovation