

Brits Argue Over Who Gets to See An Old Embroidered Cloth

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

By Joe Stonor

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LONDON—The Bayeux Tapestry, Britain’s most hallowed piece of cloth, is back in England for the first time in about 1,000 years.

So why is everybody so mad?

Brits who want to see the 11th-century relic say they’re being treated like Taylor Swift fans on Ticketmaster while American tech billionaires, luxury hotel guests and museum sponsors get to skip the line.

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Grazing Against Wildfires

By Nicolas Kaufmann

Devastating wildfires caused extensive damage across Europe this summer. In numerous European Union countries, the area burned was above the 2006-2025 average. According to the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS), 669,118 hectares in the EU had been affected by fires by September 16.

As Europe’s wildfire problem is growing, so is the search for ways to prevent fires from spreading. One approach is far from new: animals that systematically eat vegetation that could otherwise serve as fuel.

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A fisherman unloads sardines in Essaouira, Morocco. Essaouira was once an important trade port, but overfishing has caused a sharp decline in fish stocks in the area.

KANG CHUN CHENG/NEW LINES MAGAZINE

TO BHMA International edition

Greece’s Seafood Problem Starts Elsewhere

By Johnny Sturgeon and Ian Urbina

From the Ionian Sea in the west to the Euboean Gulf in the east, the Greek farmed

finfish industry is now the most valuable in the European Union. Producing over 120,000 tons annually, Greece is the bloc’s top producer of sea bream and sea bass. This export-driven industry sends over 80 percent

of its harvest abroad—primarily to the culinary hubs of Italy, Spain, and France, which absorb nearly three-quarters of these exports. Globally, the ocean-sustainability argument for fish farming—“grow more, so we

can catch less”—is one of the reasons that the \$313-billion aquaculture industry is currently the fastest-growing food sector, and why half of the seafood eaten around the world is now farm-raised rather than caught at sea.

There is a problem, though. “The aquaculture industry’s sales pitch is flat wrong,” said Daniel Pauly, project director of the Sea Around Us initiative at the University of British Columbia.

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Hundreds of people from all generations browsed through the extensive vinyl selection at this year’s two-day Vinyl Market in Athens, Greece.

TO BHMA International edition

The Analog Way: Vinyl Rises Again in Athens

By Angelos Gassenschmidt

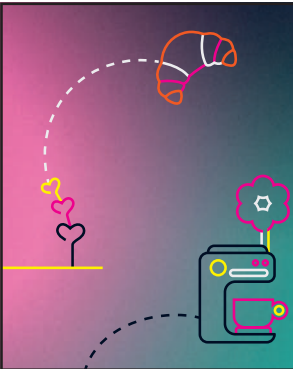
The 1970s and the early to mid-1980s were, by most accounts, the golden age of the vinyl record. Beyond the concert halls and radio airwaves, young people bonded over a shared love of music, by embracing the vinyl record as a type of ritual —

sliding a disc from its sleeve, often gently wiping the surface with a soft cloth, reading the lyrics on the liner notes provided, placing the disc on the record player and finally gendly dropping the needle. In the US, where Columbia Records introduced the long-playing (LP) vinyl record in 1948, sales skyrocketed, ultimately peaking at \$2.8 billion in 1978 (equivalent to around \$14 billion in

2026, adjusted for inflation). Nevertheless, the late 1980s and 1990s saw a rapid shift to CDs which overtook vinyl due to their portability and ease of use.

Vinyl then went from the home-music listening medium, to being pushed to the underground, carving out more of a “cult” following. Yet in recent years, that picture has changed.

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Greece’s Seafood Problem Starts Elsewhere

Much of the fishmeal and fish oil that support seafood consumed in Greece comes from global supply chains linked to pollution, labor abuses, overfishing, and food insecurity in poorer countries

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The most popular types of farmed seafood produced in Greece—sea bass and sea bream—are fed the kinds of wild fish that aquaculture claims to be saving, thereby accelerating ocean depletion, not slowing it, he explained. Two-thirds of global aquaculture grows species that are fed fishmeal and fish oil, ingredients made by cooking and pulverizing wild-caught fish. Before it reaches market, a farmed seabass or sea bream, for instance, eats at some Mediterranean farms more than two-and-a-half times its weight in wild-caught fish.

The concerns about aquaculture extend far beyond the fate of the oceans. The feed that powers most of this industry comes with a huge variety of other hidden costs, many of them borne by communities far away from Greece, according to a wide-reaching investigation by The Outlaw Ocean Project, a news organization based in Washington, DC. These costs include the loss of artisanal fishing jobs, chronic chemical exposure, avoidable worker deaths, and violent protests typically spurred by the horrid stench from fishmeal factories as countries compete for scarce sources of protein.

What economists often call “externalities,” these social and environmental impacts exact a price primarily paid by the poorer countries where the feed ingredient is harvested and processed, far from where the resulting luxury seafood is eaten. For example, sea bass and sea bream produced in Greece and sold at major European retailers were fed fishmeal tied to illegal sourcing from occupied Western Sahara as recently as 2025, more than a dozen environmental enforcement actions in US waters between 2018 and 2025, and humpback whale deaths in the Southern Ocean in 2024, according to The Outlaw Ocean Project’s investigation.

The reporting revealed that the fishmeal industry also contributes to geopolitical tensions. In 2021, a dozen Turkish bottom trawlers fishing illegally in the Aegean Sea tried to ram a Greek research vessel when the scientists began filming their activity. In 2018, riots broke out in



Fish farms along the Xiromero coastline in western Greece in 2026. The local municipality has submitted an appeal to the country’s highest court opposing proposed expansion plans.

Saint-Louis, Senegal, after the Mauritanian Coast Guard shot and killed a fisher during what the Mauritians said was a cross-border raid by a fishmeal boat.

In Greece, two of the largest aquaculture players were illegally sourcing fishmeal from Western Sahara as recently as 2025, according to trade records and audit

reports. Since the mid 1970s, Morocco has militarily occupied Western Sahara, a presence that more than 10 EU Court of Justice rulings and various UN resolutions have deemed illegal. Still, Moroccan ships routinely fish in Western Saharan waters, turning their illegal catch into fishmeal in Western Saharan plants, before exporting it to

farms globally labeled as Moroccan. A violent clash over trucks, many of them carrying this fish and fishmeal out of Western Sahara, led to the collapse of a 29-year ceasefire between the countries in 2020.

Avramar—which was recently acquired by the Canadian company Cooke Inc., and rebranded in August to

Cooke Hellas—controlled 70 percent of Greek production and exported to 40 countries, importing raw materials and ingredients from more than a dozen Moroccan companies, as of November 2025. Additionally, one of its subsidiaries, Perseus—which was absorbed into Avramar’s larger operations—received shipments of fishmeal from

Western Sahara as recently as 2022. Meanwhile, Irida—Greece’s largest feed manufacturer and a supplier to Avramar—also received raw ingredients from two companies primarily based in Western Sahara in 2024 and 2025, respectively: Copelit and Protein and Oil Industry, according to trade and audit records. When asked about these issues, none of the companies responded to a request for comment. Cooke recently responded, “We do not offer comment regarding companies we had no involvement or ownership in.”

Illegally fishing without the permission of the Sahrawis, and importing to EU markets under false Moroccan labels, has ecological and humanitarian consequences. Some 180,000 Sahrawi people live in refugee camps in Algeria, while overfishing undermines local food security. Greece is not alone in sourcing fishmeal from Western Sahara; so do France, Spain, Germany, and the Netherlands.

Issues with Greek aquaculture’s supply chains extend to food safety, as well. In 2023, shipments of fishmeal and fish oil from Oman were rejected entry to Piraeus Port for salmonella contamination and falsified veterinary health certificates, according to court documents. Destined for an otherwise unaware Greek feed mill that itself exports to the US and Canada, the 500 metric tons were accompanied by fraudulent documents falsely claiming the exporter was approved under EU law to ship food-grade products.

Environmentally, the investigation found that in countries where there was available data, at least half of the species landed by fishmeal vessels were classified by scientific studies as “over-exploited” or worse. Most of the vessels in this fleet are purse seiners or trawlers, which deploy vast nets to capture dense schools of fish. Both gear types are associated with high levels of waste, routinely hauling in large volumes of bycatch and non-target species. At least 165 of the ships in the global fishmeal fleet were bottom trawlers, conducting a particularly destructive form of fishing that uses weighted nets that scrape the ocean floor, destroying virtually



A Sahrawi demonstrator holds a sign criticizing resource-sharing between Morocco and the European Union in Western Sahara. Between 2018 and 2021, the EU paid Morocco about 208 million euros for fishing access under a partnership agreement. Sahrawi representatives have argued that the people of Western Sahara did not consent to the arrangement or receive its proceeds.

everything in their paths. The problem of unsustainable fishing is compounded by heavy government subsidies that keep too many vessels operating, accelerating pressure on already stressed fisheries.

“Any accounting of the true impact of aquaculture has to start not with the farm, but with the feed,” said Pauly. “And that kind of accounting offers a very different picture than the industry offers.”

For most of human history, we ate what ecosystems produced on their own: wild fish, grazing animals, and crops grown for people. Livestock survived largely on grass and agricultural leftovers that humans didn’t eat. Today, we do something different: We grow or catch food that people could eat and feed it to animals instead, especially in industrial livestock and fish farming. These calories are converted before they’re consumed.

Animals have become less like savings accounts that turn waste into food, and more like biological factories steered by globally traded feed commodities such as soy and fishmeal. Roughly 90 percent of the catch used to produce fishmeal globally is edible to humans, according to a 2017 study published in the *Fish and Fisheries* journal. Most fishmeal plants around the world rely on whole fish rather than processing waste or inedible byproducts, further intensifying local protein scarcity.

The feed industry has emphasized that it is decreasing its reliance on fishmeal and fish oil, and especially on the use of whole fish or fish that can be eaten by people. However, as aquaculture overall grows, so does demand for fishmeal. The total amount of global fishmeal production is predicted to rise by nearly 10 percent, mostly from trimmings, between 2022 and 2032, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization. Asked about sustainability concerns tied to her industry, Véronique Jamin, a spokesperson from the international fishmeal association, the IFFO, said that fish farming is “the most efficient animal protein system.” She added that her organization’s “role is not to advise which markets should use fishmeal and fish oil.” Sustainability frameworks won’t work “if they ignore real-world economics,” she said, and seafood companies have to respond to “what people actually want to buy and eat.”

Efforts to move away from fishmeal and fish oil have struggled. Researchers have identified various potential alternative food sources



Fishmeal plant along the northern coast of Peru on April 25, 2025, during the start of the fishing season.

for carnivorous farmed fish—including seaweed, cassava waste, soldier-fly larvae, single-cell proteins produced by fungi and bacteria, and even sewage. None are being produced affordably at scale, however. The alternatives often lack the full range of nutrients that support the growth of farmed fish, especially omega-3. Certain “green” options, like insect meal, are expensive, and as a result, there has been limited interest among feed companies to pay a premium for them.

As the production of seafood has grown more globalized, its supply chains have stretched longer, and it has become tougher for consumers to know whether it was harvested sustainably or legally. Most grocers who sell seafood are in the dark as well, because tracking is difficult and costly. Robert

K. Stumberg, professor at Georgetown Law and supply-chain expert, said this is partly because grocers typically buy from wholesalers and rarely track their suppliers. The other reason may be plausible deniability, he added. “Companies can escape blame or the need to fix problems if they’re unaware of them.”

Where government regulators have proven lacking in ensuring that supply chains are free from unsustainable, illegal, or unethical practices, industry-led certification programs have sought to fill the gap. Critics say these programs serve more as a sustainability smokescreen, while giving downstream customers a way to avoid looking deeper into their supply chains.

Devan Meserve, a spokesperson for The Global

Seafood Alliance, which runs a program called Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP), said that her organization represents the “most comprehensive program for farmed seafood,” partly because it covers the “entire aquaculture production chain.” Protecting workers on the fishing vessels that supply feed mills is, however, an “immense challenge,” she noted, because audits occur strictly at port and do not witness harvest conditions. She added that her organization helps the industry counter illegal and overfishing by requiring feed mills to source most of the fish they use in fishmeal or fish oil from fisheries accredited by certification programs like MarineTrust and Marine Stewardship Council. None of Greece’s mills, hatcheries, farms, or processors are cur-

rently BAP-certified.

Partly bolstered by these certification programs, seafood companies routinely make marketing claims about the ethics and sustainability of their seafood. Often, these claims fail to reckon with crimes or social concerns further up their supply chains, including on the ships or at the plants that produce the feed for the fish farms. This disconnect is creating growing legal risk for seafood companies and grocers: Since 2020, at least nine lawsuits alleging false sustainability marketing have been brought against six seafood companies in the US. The Outlaw Ocean investigation assessed more than 800 seafood companies that made marketing claims comparable to—or stronger than—those cited in the lawsuits and found that over half

of the companies had documented crimes or concerns within their supply chains.

As Greek aquaculture looks to expand, the disconnect between its sustainability claims and external feed poses a legal and reputational risk. While the EU is introducing fines for supply chains that fail to independently undertake due diligence, these won’t enter into force until 2028. Until then, the onus will remain with Greece to untangle the legal and environmental mess of its own waters.

Dana Cleaveley, a research consultant formerly with SeaChoice, a Canadian sustainable-seafood group, said many industries have already had to begin reckoning with the human rights and environmental abuses buried in their supply chains. She cited sweatshop garments, blood diamonds, and fair-trade coffee as examples. Seafood, she said, has been slower to face that kind of scrutiny. But as the world searches for more protein and leans further into aquaculture, that may change, particularly if more governments begin restricting imports tied to illegality or unsustainable practices. “That’s when investors will begin to see material, not just reputational, risk,” she said, “and companies will have to adjust.”

Ian Urbina is an investigative journalist and the director of The Outlaw Ocean Project

Johnny Sturgeon is a London-based reporter for The Outlaw Ocean Project

This story is part of a larger investigation conducted by an international team of journalists based at The Outlaw Ocean Project, a news organization in Washington, D.C.



Fishmeal plant along the northern coast of Peru on April 25, 2025, during the start of the fishing season.

The Food for Feed Investigation

Over five years, The Outlaw Ocean Project carried out an extensive investigation into fishmeal and fish oil. The reporting effort mapped a vast segment of the entire global fishmeal industry, including more than 1,400 fishmeal factories across 64 countries. It traced supply chains from fishing vessels to processing plants, feed mills, fish farms, and seafood retailers. The reporting involved dozens of journalists from around the world, conducting visits to factories and farms and boarding fishmeal ships at sea. The reporters assessed more than 2,300 ships tied to fishmeal production, operating in the waters of at least 30 countries.

Between a Home and the Street, Where Policy has yet to Reach

As rents soar, a growing number of Greeks are slipping out of secure housing without ever reaching the street, invisible to official statistics and, so far, to state policy

ALIAS KONSTANTINIS/REUTERS



A man waits to have his clothes washed by the Ithaca mobile laundry service for the homeless in central Athens, Greece, February 12, 2017.

By Kristina Tremonti

By nine in the morning they have showered, changed and opened their laptops. They take calls, deal with customers and draw a salary. What their colleagues do not know is that, when the working day ends, some of them go back not to a flat, but to their car.

Speaking to *TO VIMA International Edition*, Maria Karra, founder of the Emfasis Foundation, says the charity is currently supporting six such people in Kallithea, a dense district just south of central Athens. Volunteers bring food, help them charge phones and laptops and, where they can, find somewhere cheap to shower and wash clothes. The modest aim is to keep them functioning long enough to save the deposit and advance rent that even a small flat now demands.

"All they have is a laptop," Karra says. To her, these workers embody a form of homelessness Greece has been slow to recognize, because it does not resemble the image the word conjures. "Say 'homeless' and people switch off," she adds, "they picture an old man with a beard on the pavement."

The line between housed and homeless has become harder to draw. It runs through parked cars and borrowed rooms; through students drifting between friends' sofas because rent is

out of reach; through adults who have lived in a relative's spare bedroom for years; through patients who travel to Athens for treatment and cannot afford a bed near the hospital; through families living in buildings with no electricity or running water.

Athens' Deputy Mayor for Social Solidarity, Mina Fountzoula, meets the same people from a higher rung of the administrative ladder. Municipal teams, she says, know of some people living in abandoned cars, on vacant plots and in homes cut off from basic utilities. "These are conditions of homelessness," she says, "even if this is not the homeless person you see sleeping in the street."

The further homelessness drifts from the pavement, however, the harder it is to count, and what is not counted is rarely governed.

The arithmetic of invisibility

The OECD's latest country data capture the problem with troubling precision. Greece's figure for 2026 is 809 homeless people, but that number is just a January snapshot of people staying in night shelters and homeless hostels listed on a ministry digital registry. It omits everyone sleeping rough, living in cars or makeshift dwellings, held in institutions or staying with family and friends for want of anywhere else. Greece, the OECD notes drily, has no legal obligation to collect homelessness data at all.

The 809, in other words, captures solely shelter occupancy rather than homelessness. The state-registered network of 34 homeless facilities offers 1,122 beds, according to the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family Affairs. The Municipality of Athens' own count last October found 681 people within the municipality alone — a city of about 640,000, not the wider metropolitan area of some 3.7 million.

Greek law already takes a broader view than Greek statistics. It defines as homeless anyone lacking secure access to adequate housing, including people living temporarily, out of necessity, in institutions or unsuitable accommodation. On a European level, FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless, has spent years trying to settle the definitional question through its ETHOS framework. It defines a home as more than a roof: it requires adequate physical space, room for privacy and social life, and legal security of tenure. From that follow four categories — rooflessness, houselessness, insecure housing and inadequate housing — along a continuum of exclusion that includes tenants facing eviction, sofa-surfers, domestic abuse victims, and families living in spaces unfit for habitation.

Karra puts the taxonomy more plainly: "The moment you don't have your own key, you don't decide where you

live, for how long or on what terms," she says, "you are not an autonomous person, you can't be independent."

The Athens count, carried out with Panteion University's Department of Social Policy in October 2025, attaches numbers to that abstraction. It recorded 681 people, 384 of them on the street and 297 through support organizations, but even that count captures only part of the picture. Marianella Kloka, President of the Greek Anti-Poverty Network, has argued that Greece still lacks systematic national recording not only of precarious housing but even of visible homelessness. The people easiest to count are those whose housing crisis has already reached its most acute stage; those still sliding towards it remain statistically invisible until they finally fall through. That gap is where most of the problem lies, and where the most pressing policy questions remain unaddressed.

Rent as a root cause of poverty

In the Athens count, 72.2 percent of people said they had lost their homes for financial reasons. Addiction and mental illness still play a part, but the main driver is now the housing market, and in Greece it bears down harder than anywhere else in Europe. According to Eurostat, 26.4 percent of Greeks lived in households spending at least 40 percent of their disposable income on housing, more than three times the EU average of 7.7

percent. Rents rose 10.1 percent last year, second only to Croatia. Little wonder, then, that 87.1 percent of Greeks reported difficulty making ends meet, again the highest share in the Union, against an average of 42.5 percent.

That poverty did not arrive all at once, each of Greece's crises has produced its own homeless, and Kloka traces a decade of overlapping emergencies — the debt crisis, the arrival of refugees, the pandemic, climate disasters — each generating new forms of poverty faster than policy could keep up. Today, she argues, expensive housing is no longer merely one hardship among many for poor households but a producer of poverty in its own right.

For years, the Greek family absorbed much of that pressure: adult children moved back in, grandparents gave up rooms, relatives took in relatives. In a country of high home ownership and almost no social rented housing, the family home functioned as a form of asset-based social security — Greece's traditional "safety net".

But the mechanism is now weakening in both directions. Karra says younger adults, already struggling with rents, stagnant incomes and the cost of raising children, increasingly lack either the space or the money to absorb an aging parent who can no longer live independently. Families contact Emfasis, she says, not because they are unwilling to care for an el-

derly relative but because they simply cannot afford to do so.

"It's not only that you don't have the space," Karra says. "You don't have the money." The result is that a system that long depended on families to compensate for gaps in the welfare state is becoming less able to do so. The net, as Karra puts it, "now has holes in it."

As rents, energy, food and care costs rise, a spare bedroom becomes harder to offer indefinitely. The informal arrangements that keep people off the street also keep them out of the statistics. Fountzoula concedes that the municipality can identify people in cars and visibly inadequate homes. Those moving quietly between relatives and friends are another matter. "They are not recorded," she says.

The gap between institutions

Homelessness rarely registers in the statistics until it is well advanced, and it is often on hospital wards and in shelters, at the point of crisis, that public services first meet it.

Among the cases known to Kloka's network are two cancer patients who are homeless while undergoing chemotherapy, whose treatment does not require a hospital stay, and who return from each session to the street. Karra describes others who travel to Athens from the provinces for treatment and, unable to afford a room nearby, sleep in their cars. At

the other end of the process are what social workers call “social cases”: patients well enough to be discharged from hospital whom doctors keep in the ward, at their own discretion, because there is nowhere safe for them to go.

Psychiatric care exposes the same fault line. Municipal shelters, Fountzoula explains, can only take in people they are equipped to look after: someone whose condition is stable, who is following treatment and can manage on their own. Those whose needs are too acute for a shelter, yet not severe enough to warrant admission to a psychiatric unit, fall between the two. “And that,” she says, “is where the absence of the state becomes visible.”

It is a revealing remark, because the gap it describes is not between hospital and pavement. It lies between institutions, each built to deal with one piece of a problem. The hospital treats illness, the shelter provides a bed for a time and the municipality can recover lost identity documents, supply medication and food and offer job advice, yet what the individual often needs falls between all of them: a stable home with continuing support attached.

The same logic applies to women leaving domestic-violence refuges. Society urges them to leave abusive homes; it is far less clear on the question that follows. “We keep telling her: leave, leave, leave,” Karra says. “Leave for where?”

For Karra, the recurring weakness of the state’s response fits in a single word: temporary. Emergency accommodation, food programmes, shelters and transitional housing are all indispensable, yet each is built as a stopgap: Athens’ Multifunctional Homeless Centre houses about 200 people a day, usually for six months, renewable once.

The trouble starts when a temporary intervention has no permanent destination, a distinction Fountzoula draws herself. The municipality, she says, can improve shelters, hire specialist staff and bring vulnerable people in from the street, but “the state has to guarantee people stable, autonomous housing”. The Municipality of Athens, in other words, can move someone from the pavement to a bed, but taking them from that bed to a home is a job for the state.

Policy after the fall

It would be wrong to say Greece is doing nothing. According to the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family, the government now has some 48 housing-related programs under way with a combined budget of more than €6.5bn, most of it aimed at home purchase, renovation and energy efficiency rather than at people on the margins. The instruments for those at the



Night shift street work of EMFASIS Foundation volunteers and social work professionals in Athens, Greece.

bottom are smaller, and their take-up is uneven.

The program, Housing and Work for the Homeless III, launched in 2025, pairs rent and basic-needs subsidies with psychosocial support, links to services, wage subsidies and training. Its €20 million budget was designed to reach 1,640 people nationally. In Athens, the current cycle funds 46 households, yet the support is also time-limited: rent subsidies run for a maximum of 24 months, after which those who have not found work or cheaper housing risk losing their homes again.

Catching people before the fall: prevention as policy

What Greece still lacks is a prevention system: a mechanism that identifies households as they begin to fall behind and intervenes before eviction.

Vienna offers an instructive contrast. For three decades the city has funded a dedicated eviction-prevention service that steps in when tenants fall behind and negotiates with their landlords; a study by the Vienna University of Economics and Business found it averted eviction in almost nine cases out of ten. When inflation surged in 2023, the city went further and began paying off tenants’ rent arrears directly, through a scheme called Housing Security Plus (Wohnungssicherung Plus) that it says had saved more than 11,300 households from eviction by mid-2024.

Spain has lately offered Europe the opposite impression. On September 23 police carried Maricarmen Abascal, 87, on a stretcher from the Madrid flat she had lived in since 1956, after the investment company that had bought the building pressed a fourth eviction

attempt. The case ignited protests across the country and, within days, a deal allowing her to return.

It also forced the government’s hand. Spanish Prime Minister, Pedro Sánchez, rushed through emergency decrees to shield vulnerable tenants from eviction until 2030, curb speculative purchases by investment funds and extend expiring leases. On October 2, Congress threw them out, as the Catalan separatists of Junts joined the conservative Popular party and the far-right Vox in voting against.

Sánchez responded by dissolving parliament and calling a snap election scheduled November 29. On October 6, his cabinet re-approved a revised package, including interest-free loans for first-time buyers, a two-year lease extension for tenants who are up to date with their rent and limits on

rent rises, which it hopes to pass through parliament’s standing committee, the scaled-down chamber that sits while Congress is dissolved.

At the Thessaloniki International Fair (TIF) in September, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, also touched upon home ownership, with a third round of the My Home (Spiti Mou) scheme: €2 billion in low-interest loans for young buyers from January 2027. On October 6, the day Sánchez relaunched his decrees, Mitsotakis, speaking at the “Dialogues for Athens” Conference, stated that the housing crisis was a European problem requiring incentives and political agreement.

Both leaders have put home ownership at the center of their policy proposals, yet the most pressing issue is addressing households which are already

sliding towards homelessness: those in rent arrears, in insecure or inadequate accommodation, or dependent on relatives for a roof. For them, ownership support is largely irrelevant; what matters is prevention and a supply of affordable rented homes.

Who will hand over the key?

The debate about what Greece should do next keeps returning to permanent housing.

Kloka advocates mobilizing both public property and empty private homes, while Karra wants Greece to test Housing First, the model that inverts the traditional sequence of homelessness policy. Instead of requiring people to become sober, employable, medically stable or otherwise “housing ready” before they are offered a permanent home, Housing First begins with the home and builds support around it. Crucially, access does not depend on fitting a category. Where Greek schemes are tied to age bands, income thresholds or benefit status, Housing First sets no conditions on treatment or behavior, gives tenants an ordinary lease and keeps support in place for as long as it is needed. In a Greek pilot, tenants would cover their rent through state allowances.

European evaluations consistently find that most participants of the program, roughly 80 to 85 percent, stay housed. Finland, which made the model national policy in 2008, had cut long-term homelessness by about two-thirds by 2022.

Emfasis’ own request is deliberately modest. It wants to secure 12 apartments for 24 months to run as a pilot, evaluated in collaboration with Greek universities that would bring expertise in social policy and the research methods needed to measure its effects in Athens.

The municipality does not dispute the principle, “of course we support it,” Fountzoula says. But she is equally clear about the limits of what the city can do: within its mandate and budget it can run shelters and street teams, not supply permanent homes. The initiative, in other words, has come from civil society, which is importing models proven abroad, while the decisive levers of housing stock, funding and legal powers remain with the central government.

Until the state steps up with a housing policy equal to the scale of the problem, the people at the heart of this story will remain suspended between policy and pavement.



Night shift workers from the EMFASIS foundation checking up on homeless people during a rainy evening, near Monastiraki Square, Athens, Greece.

Continued from Page One

Targeted grazing could play an important role, according to research. Sheep, goats and other livestock can reduce the amount of combustible vegetation while also helping to maintain a more open landscape.

What grazing animals can do

Scientist Elsa Varela Redondo of the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) considers the scientific evidence for the benefits of targeted grazing relatively strong. Modelling has shown that fires can spread more slowly and with less intensity in actively managed landscapes, she says. Grazing is one element of this approach, alongside tree cultivation and landscape mosaics.

“Small ruminants are able to reduce biomass by grazing, browsing and trampling,” says Varela Redondo, who specializes in sustainable rural management and forestry. This can help control the shrub layer and reduce so-called ladder fuels – layers of vegetation that can allow a surface fire to reach tree canopies.

Grazing can also have another benefit, she says. “It can help to recover pasture land with more herbaceous species that are less flammable and can act as a natural fuel break.”

But how the animals are used is crucial. “Skilled management, with high density of animals per hectare over small periods of time is the key to attain the desired result,” Varela Redondo notes. The animals therefore need to be deployed precisely where their effect is required. “Small ruminants are not inherently good or bad. It all depends on management.”

Combining grazing with other measures can also be useful. Varela Redondo points to experiences in which grazing has been combined with mechanical vegetation management or controlled burning. Herds, however, are not machines for removing biomass. They need to be managed by experienced shepherds.

Wildfire researcher Gavriil Xanthopoulos, a former research director for forest fires at the Hellenic Agricultural Organization DIMITRA, describes the historical role of grazing as significant. In his view, it not only reduced the amount of combustible vegetation but also kept clearings and paths open and helped maintain rural communities.

“A large part of the worsening of wildfires today is due to the shift to livestock being kept in stables, which goes hand in hand with rural

Grazing Against Wildfires: Can Europe’s Livestock Become A Natural Firefighting Force?

As Europe’s wildfire problem grows, targeted grazing is explicitly recognized as part of wildfire prevention. However, this method has its limits



Sheep walking on the Palia Strata route in Amorgos, Greece.

depopulation,” Xanthopoulos says.

Where shrubland once stood at around 0.5 to 1.5 meters in height and was interrupted by gaps, he says, dense vegetation of more than two meters can now be found in many areas.

Greece is turning to grazing again

Greece has also recognized the role of grazing at a political and legal level. A law adopted last February explicitly identifies controlled extensive and semi-extensive grazing as an instrument of wildfire prevention. The approach involves planned and repeated management designed to reduce combustible vegetation and create areas that can help slow fires. Greece’s National Adaptation Strategy had already recommended controlled grazing in 2016 as a way of reducing undergrowth and flammable vegetation.

The approach is not, however, a substitute for other forms of wildfire prevention. Xanthopoulos argues that where enough extensive livestock farmers remain, they need grazing plans, advice, infrastruc-

ture and financial support. Where there are too few livestock owners, programs would be needed to rebuild grazing capacity.

He also sees a potential role for livestock farmers beyond landscape management. Depending on their age and experience, they could participate in prevention and firefighting operations and could even be employed as “seasonal firefighters”.



Sheep grazing in the countryside of Attica, Greece.

The risks of grazing

Grazing requires careful planning. Overgrazing can hinder natural forest regeneration, weaken trees and create additional ecological problems over time.

Xanthopoulos also points to a historical downside. Livestock owners sometimes used fire to encourage fresh vegetation for their animals. In his assessment, such fires caused by livestock owners accounted at times

for around 10 to 20 percent of fire causes in Greece.

Spain shows how it can work

Spain has developed some of Europe’s most established grazing programs. In Andalusia, the RAPCA program has been using sheep and goats since 2005 on public forest land. The animals reduce vegetation and help maintain firebreaks. Priority is given to areas where fire-protection infrastructure and traditional livestock farming already exist, while shepherds receive financial compensation for their work.

Other Spanish regions have adopted similar approaches. Madrid uses sheep, goats, cattle and horses and expanded its program to 3,750 hectares this year. In Catalonia, the digital SilPas platform is being used to identify areas where grazing could be particularly useful. On Gran Canaria, 40 livestock-farming families are participating in a similar program this year.

Portugal is also combining grazing with other forms of vegetation management. A similar project is also cur-

rently taking place in Germany. EU-funded projects have shown that targeted grazing can reduce the accumulation of combustible material.

In southern Europe, the issue goes beyond individual forests. When agriculture is abandoned, shrubs and other vegetation spread, while the people who once managed these landscapes disappear. Alongside climate change, the European Commission therefore identifies land-use changes, the abandonment of traditional agriculture and the accumulation of biomass as important factors behind the rising wildfire risk.

Grazing is not a ‘silver bullet’

The European Commission now explicitly lists extensive grazing as one possible form of land-based wildfire prevention. Yet the precise effect of targeted grazing cannot be determined for every fire. Varela Redondo points out that it is difficult to establish whether the measure reduces the number of fires that start in the first place. Wildfires have many different causes.

The link with fire intensity, however, is clearer, she says. “We know that the severity and therefore the potential damage are reduced due to the reduction in biomass.”

The regional government of Madrid, which recorded two major wildfires this summer, reported lower fire intensity on several previously grazed areas. “In fact, in many areas woody vegetation primarily trees remained unaffected by the fire. In some cases, the grazed area clearly delineates the perimeter of the fire.” Firefighters were also able to use the areas as safe working zones during firefighting operations.

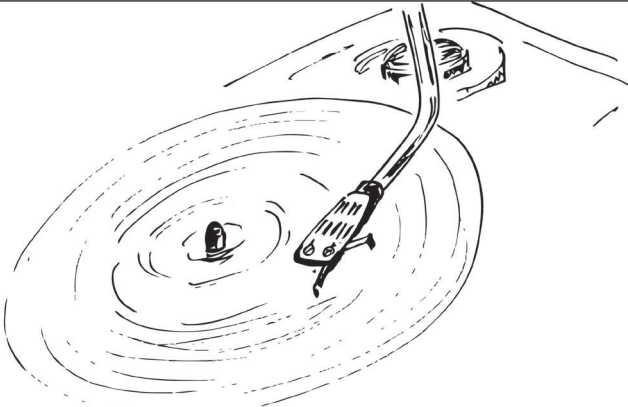
Xanthopoulos likewise attaches considerable importance to reducing fuel through grazing. But he also stresses its limits. “Of course, this is not a silver bullet,” he says. In combination with other benefits, such as supporting local communities and improving access for emergency services, however, he believes the cost-benefit ratio can be favorable.

Grazing could therefore become one component of modern wildfire prevention, particularly in regions where the abandonment of traditional agriculture has allowed combustible vegetation to accumulate.

It cannot replace firefighters, emergency services or other forms of prevention. The challenge is instead to use an old form of land management in a targeted way – in the places where it can make Europe’s increasingly fire-prone landscapes more resilient before the next flames arrive.

The Analog Way: Vinyl Rises Again in Athens

As subscription-based models proliferate in music and beyond, the city rediscovers the charm of manual music-hunting and mindful listening



Continued from Page One

According to the Recording Industry Association of America's (RIAA) 2025 Year-End Recorded Music Revenue Report, released on March 17, 2026, US vinyl sales passed \$1 billion for the first time since 1983, the format's 19th consecutive year of growth, with 46.8 million records sold against 29.5 million CDs.

In an era of on-demand music streaming, best exemplified through the convenience of Spotify with its library of more than 100 million songs, many people are beginning to feel that listening to music is analogous to becoming lost in an ocean of choice, while the subscription model has stripped away the sense of ownership.

Vinyl, with its tactile ceremony, the need for attentiveness, as well as the enjoyment that many find in actively hunting down, exploring and sampling music has a different, more romantic appeal in an era of fast digital consumption. Many audiophiles also prefer the warm sound of vinyl, and some even enjoy the faint crackle of a needle in the groove.

To get a deeper sense of the culture around the vinyl record listening experience, particularly in Greece, TO VIMA International Edition talked to Stelios Eleftheriou, one of the two organizers of the Vinyl Market, a cultural event hosted yearly in the New Retorts building in Technopolis, Gazi, since 2015. At a time when vinyl is experiencing a resurgence in popularity, this vinyl connoisseur and entrepreneur is passionately on board to help bring that trend back into the mainstream.

Why do you think vinyl is making a comeback at a time when most, if not all, music is available for free on your phone?

Yes, that's a very good observation. First of all, vinyl is a way of listening to music but it's not only that. When someone hears the music they love, the band they love, through the sound that comes out of a turntable and a record, the sound quality has nothing whatsoever to do with a CD, a USB stick playing on a computer, or an app on a phone.

That unique experience makes listeners love this way of listening, the sound that comes out of vinyl. That's why it keeps spreading. Not because it's a lifestyle. It's a



way of listening to sound. The analog way.

Could you say it's something like a ritual, so to speak?

Yes, yes, exactly. There's the ritual of opening the record sleeve, looking at the artwork, which was curated by the band itself or by people who specialize in that, taking the record out, cleaning it, putting it on the turntable, placing the needle in the right spot. It is a ritual. But once that ritual is done and the speaker starts playing what the vinyl produces, that's when the mind truly can't grasp how clean and good the analog sound is.

How would you describe the profile of the average vinyl collector today?

The average collector today with a fairly substantial collection is certainly someone in the second half of their life, someone over 40. It's someone who is so passionate about the musicians they love, whether it's rock, jazz, or classical mu-

sic, that they can't listen to it any other way. Someone who [has experienced vinyl and] listens to the incredible voice of Maria Callas can't listen to her on Spotify. You understand, it's impossible. They have to hear her this way.

Our experience has shown that this profile is now expanding and getting younger, with lots and lots of

young women in particular aged 20–25, 30, coming to vinyl, whereas in the past it was more middle-aged and more male-dominated. I'd say the profile of the vinyl collector has changed in this direction over the last five years.

We've been around since 2015 as the Vinyl Market, keeping vinyl alive, and over the last five years, and a



Sleeved, categorized and densely packed together—vinyl records as far as the eye can see at the Vinyl Market in Athens, Greece.

little before COVID too, young women started coming to collect records. We often notice another phenomenon, one that's quite interesting and worth mentioning:

they start buying records before they even have a turntable, and once they're ready, they buy the turntable to listen to them. In other words, they build the collection first and get the turntable afterwards, or at least at the same time.

Is it mainly younger people who do this?

Yes, many younger people start by buying records first, discovering the bands they like, the music genre they like. Every genre is there, from light popular Greek music to heavy metal. The whole range of music imaginable. So, after buying a few records at first, the collector, realizing that they have the record but can't play it, they inevitably get the playback machine, what's called a pick-up in Greek.

What advice would you give to someone who

wants to get into this and start a collection?

What I'd suggest is that, if they can, they find someone close to them, among their friends or family, who is a collector and has the whole setup for reproducing this unique analog sound - the amplifier, the turntable and so on - and try it out and listen.

Go one evening to a friend, a partner, a relative, a cousin, even a grandfather, a young grandfather who might have a new grandchild, and hear that song they love, the sound they hear through their laptop, played from a turntable spinning a record. If they start listening and, since every person is different and we all have different personalities, they begin to like it, that's a start toward building their own collection and their own engagement with vinyl. Their own personal vinyl library, so to speak, the way you'd have a good book collection.

Could you say that music this way becomes a proper hobby, instead of just passive listening?

The vinyl listener doesn't listen passively. They listen very demandingly. Even if there's a problem with the playback equipment or with the record itself, a scratch as we call it, they notice it. That's part of the ritual you asked me about earlier. They notice it, and so they become an active listener of the music they love, and they start to love the music they've chosen even more. It's certainly an artistic hobby, let's say, or an artistic form of listening.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

I'd like to add that the Vinyl Market has been at the Technopolis City of Athens since 2015, with more than 80 exhibitors from all over Greece, so a visitor can see all the vinyl currently available in Greece in a single visit, and most important of all, with no entrance fee.

Instead of going to 10, 20, 30 different places to find what they want, a visitor comes to one place, one hall, at Technopolis, one of the hot spots of Athens, and sees whatever interests them, without any cost.

On a final note, I sincerely hope people come to love vinyl, records, turntables, and that sound in general even more, because it truly is an active way of engaging with music.

Brits Are Arguing Over Who Gets to See a 230-Foot Long Embroidered Cloth

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

The arrival of the Bayeux Tapestry from France has sparked a class war in England

Continued from Page One

“That’s not what this is all about. The Bayeux Tapestry should be for everyone,” said Sasha Mills, 25.

The tapestry holds a particular position in British public consciousness. It tells, over 230 feet of finely embroidered cloth, the story of the last time England was conquered—the victory of William of Normandy at the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

Since its creation by nuns in England, the tapestry has lived mostly in Bayeux, a medieval town in northern France. It has survived French revolutionaries who wanted to use it to cover a wagon and Nazi soldiers who tried to move it to Berlin. After seven years of diplomatic wrangling, England and France struck a deal to temporarily bring it to the British Museum in London.

For many Brits, seeing it is akin to a birthright.

“It’s an integral story to British identity. That’s why people feel an emotional attachment to it,” said Daisy Dixon, a philosophy of art lecturer at the University of Cardiff.

So when tickets became available ahead of the exhibition’s launch in September, it wasn’t a huge surprise that there were obstacles. Mills, a postgraduate student in art history, set her alarm for 8 a.m., and logged on early to the museum’s site. She encountered a queue that ballooned to over 80,000 people—the longest in the museum’s history.

“I was like, ‘OK, so there’s no way I’m ever going to get these tickets.’”

The real shock to the British public came when word started to trickle out about who was having no trouble getting in.

Luxury hotel One Aldwych offered tickets to the tapestry as part of a package stay, with guests in rooms that cost around \$1,100 a night promised a viewing any date and time of their choosing.

“How can it be right that some are able to pay their way in while others have to scramble for a chance to see this piece of our heritage?” Helena Dollimore, the parliamentary representative for Hastings, told *the Guardian*.

The British Museum defended the allocation for guests of the hotel, which is one of its sponsors. The



The first visitors view the Bayeux Tapestry as it goes on display to the public at the British Museum in London, Britain, September 10, 2026. The 70-meter (230-foot) length embroidered panel story recounts the events leading up to the famous Battle of Hastings in 1066 and the subsequent Norman defeat of Anglo-Saxon King Harold II, and has moved temporarily from France to Britain for the first time in nearly a thousand years.



People order drinks at the Museum Tavern pub, which is temporarily renamed as ‘The Beer Tapestry’ to coincide with the Bayeux Tapestry going on view at the British Museum in London, Britain, September 10, 2026.

museum also noted it set aside tickets for children and rolled out tapestry-related programs at schools.

On Oct. 21, the museum is releasing a fresh batch of tickets to see the tapestry later in its 10-month London stay. Competition to join

the 40-minute long, one-way procession past the embroidery is expected to be fierce: Bayeux Tapestry fever is running so hot that a showing of a full-scale replica in nearby Reading is sold out till the end of January 2027.

Tempers flared anew

in August when *the Guardian* reported that Palantir co-founder Peter Thiel got a private viewing despite having no public record of donations to the museum.

“I love the Bayeux Tapestry but I think history will record that the most signifi-

cant moment in its visit to the British Museum is that an American oligarch was allowed to see it before the King and Queen or President [Macron] were,” author Frank Cottrell-Boyce wrote on X.

Thiel didn’t comment

on *the Guardian*’s report, and didn’t respond to a request from *The Wall Street Journal*.

After the Thiel revelation, Rebecca Dale, a government worker from Leicestershire, posted her thoughts and was struck by the response.

“I didn’t expect people to be so outraged,” she said, even if the scramble felt like “the Eras tour for history fans.” On a lunch break at work shortly after her Instagram post, she opened her phone to 200 new comments.

The anger makes sense to Dale, 28. “I think it does create this uncomfortable feeling of it being a two-tiered system.”

The debate quickly reached Britain’s new prime minister. In his first appearance at Prime Minister’s Questions—a weekly ritual in which the leader is interrogated by political friends and foes—Andy Burnham was asked about access to the tapestry amid questions about soaring debt, taxes and Russian threats to NATO.

“We want the maximum number of kids to have access, to stand in front of that tapestry while it’s here in the U.K. It’s a major moment in our island’s history,” he told politicians.

But a noisy portion of the British public is questioning whether the museum is fulfilling Burnham’s commitment.

“It’s just not fair is it,” said Laura Roberts, who unsuccessfully attempted to nab tickets during their initial release.

Traveling down with her daughter from Blackpool for a tapestry-less visit to the museum, Roberts challenged the argument that sponsors should be getting something for their financial commitment.

“That’s not the point, is it? They should be doing it for altruistic purposes,” she said.

The British Museum is also under fire over prices.

Standard tickets are £33, more than three times the cost of visiting the tapestry in its regular home in Bayeux.

So how to get over missing out? Disgruntled fan Mills has an idea: remember what the tapestry’s all about.

“It’s not like ‘yay, England!’ It’s literally a record of how we got conquered.”