

Aerosol chemistry above an extended Archipelago of the Eastern Mediterranean basin during strong northern winds

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Abstract

Detailed aerosol chemical predictions by a comprehensive model system (i.e. PMCAMx, WRF, GEOS-CHEM), along with airborne and ground-based observations, are presented and analyzed over a wide domain covering the Aegean Archipelago. The studied period is ten

1 successive days of 2011, characterized by strong northern winds, which is the most frequently
2 prevailing synoptic pattern during summer. The submicron aerosol load in the lower
3 troposphere above the Archipelago is homogeneously enriched in sulfate (average modeled and
4 measured submicron sulfate of 5.5 and 5.8 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, respectively), followed by organics (2.3
5 and 4.4 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$) and ammonium (1.5 and 1.7 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$). Aerosol concentrations smoothly decline
6 aloft, reaching lower values ($< 1 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$) above 4.2 km altitude. The evaluation criteria rate
7 the model results for sulfate, ammonium, chloride, elemental carbon, organic carbon and total
8 PM_{10} mass concentrations as 'good', indicating a satisfactory representation of the aerosol
9 chemistry and precursors. Higher model discrepancies are confined to the highest (e.g. peak
10 sulfate values) and lowest ends (e.g. nitrate) of the airborne aerosol mass size distribution, as
11 well as in airborne organic aerosol concentrations (model underestimation ca. 50%). The latter
12 is most likely related to the intense fire activity at the eastern Balkan area and the Black Sea
13 coastline, which is not represented in the current model application. The investigation of the
14 effect of local variables on model performance revealed that the best agreement between
15 predictions and observations occurs during high winds from the northeast, as well as for the
16 area confined above the Archipelago and up to 2.2 km altitude. The atmospheric ageing of
17 biogenic particles is suggested to be activated in the aerosol chemistry module, when treating
18 organics in a sufficient nitrogen and sulfate-rich environment, such as that over the Aegean
19 basin. More than 70% of the predicted aerosol mass over the Aegean Archipelago during a
20 representative Etesian episode is related to transport of aerosols and their precursors from
21 outside the modeling domain.

22

23 **1 Introduction**

24 The geographical characteristics, specific atmospheric conditions, large range of natural and
25 anthropogenic sources in the Mediterranean basin, create a complex environmental situation
26 contributing to the aerosol load. The major motivations for characterizing aerosols in the
27 Mediterranean are their subsequent climate forcing (Nabat et al., 2014), as well as relevant air
28 quality and health issues (Rodríguez et al., 2002; Medina et al., 2004). During summertime,
29 regional circulation phenomena and increased photochemistry, favor the accumulation and
30 secondary formation of atmospheric aerosols (Millan et al., 1997; Rodríguez et al., 2002; Pey
31 et al., 2013). The atmosphere over the Aegean Archipelago (also referred as the Aegean Sea),
32 part of the Eastern Mediterranean (EM), is frequently affected by strong northern winds
33 during the warm period. These winds are often bound to the Etesian flow (Maheras, 1986;

1 Kotroni et al., 2001; Tyrlis and Lelieveld, 2013; Anagnostopoulou et al., 2014), which is the
2 most common synoptic situation over the Aegean Sea (AS) during summer, transporting dry
3 and cool air masses downwind southern Russia, Ukraine, central/eastern Europe, the Balkan
4 states and Turkey (Vrekoussis et al., 2005; Bryant et al., 2006; Sciare et al., 2008). The
5 emissions from biomass burning and important urban and industrial centers situated in these
6 regions, combined with the intense photochemical ageing of the arriving plumes and the
7 decreased deposition of species in marine environment makes the atmosphere above the AS a
8 favorable area for aerosol investigation particularly during regional-range transport
9 phenomena observed in summer.

10 Previous aerosol modeling studies covering the AS (Lazaridis et al., 2005; Fountoukis et al.,
11 2011; Im et al., 2012) have shown the predominance of non sea-salt sulfate in the fine aerosol
12 mode, in agreement with previous ground-based observations (Mihalopoulos et al., 1997;
13 Bardouki et al., 2003; Kanakidou et al., 2011), unlike anywhere else in Europe. Together with
14 the high degree of oxidation of the organic matter (Hildebrandt et al., 2010), these findings are
15 both consistent with the atmospheric conditions stated above. In addition, the important role
16 of natural aerosol sources (sea-salt production and long-range transported dust plumes) has
17 been investigated, not only on the total PM₁₀ mass levels (particulate matter with aerodynamic
18 diameter < 10 μm) and on model performance, but also on the gas-aerosol interactions
19 towards the modification of inorganic aerosol composition (Kallos et al., 2007; Astitha and
20 Kallos, 2008, Athanasopoulou et al., 2008; Im, 2013). Another common output of model
21 applications over this Archipelago is the exogenous influence (short-, medium- and long-
22 range transport) on aerosol chemical composition, PM₁₀ concentration levels (European limit
23 exceedances) and regional climate, in comparison with the contribution of local sources
24 (Lazaridis et al., 2005; Kallos et al., 2007; Im and Kanakidou, 2012).

25 The relation between meteorology and aerosol load over the EM is less understood, and it has
26 been only until recently that people started studying it using atmospheric models. Im et al.
27 (2012) and Megaritis et al. (2013) have studied the influence of temperature increases up to 5
28 K on the chemical composition of the aerosol particles. Their results are contradictory for
29 sulfate (negative and positive changes in mass concentrations, respectively), but they are in
30 agreement for nitrate (decrease in mass concentrations) and organics (increase in mass
31 concentrations). Inversely, the effect of aerosols on regional climate has been investigated by
32 Solomos et al. (2011) and Kallos et al. (2014), who showed that the properties of atmospheric

1 particles can modify the cloud structure and precipitation during a heavy rainfall event over
2 the EM. Given the complexity of the aerosol mixture in the Mediterranean basin, further
3 studies on the chemical characterization and size distribution of the aerosol mass will
4 elucidate the interactions between airborne particles, meteorology and climate in the region.

5 A satisfactory representation of aerosol chemical species by model applications is a
6 challenging task. Predictions over the AS from the aforementioned studies have been
7 evaluated against concurrent or past measurements (Chabas and Lefevre, 2000; Kouvarakis et
8 al., 2001; Smolik et al., 2003; Eleftheriadis et al., 2006; Gerasopoulos et al., 2006; 2007;
9 Sciare et al., 2003; 2008; Koulouri et al., 2008; Pikridas et al., 2010; Im et al., 2012).
10 Comparisons showed a moderate to large underestimation of the simulated PM₁₀ (Lazaridis et
11 al., 2005; Im and Kanakidou, 2012) or organic mass concentration (Fountoukis et al., 2011),
12 despite that inorganic species are well-represented (Astitha and Kallos, 2008; Athanasopoulou
13 et al., 2008; Fountoukis et al., 2011). Improved model performance for precipitation is
14 achieved when cloud condensation nuclei activation of aerosols is included (Kallos et al.,
15 2014).

16 Most of the above modeling studies focus on the surface representation of aerosols and are
17 compared against ground-based observational data from the station of Finokalia in Crete
18 Island (south AS). A few modeling studies that investigated the vertical profiles of dust and
19 sea-salt aerosols found that particles over the EM did not elevate higher than two kilometers
20 (Astitha and Kallos, 2008; Solomos et al., 2011). The latter study, which was compared
21 against airborne measurements conducted near the Israeli coast, showed a good correlation
22 between modeled and airborne measurements of aerosol mass concentrations. An earlier
23 airborne experiment over the Aegean Archipelago (not bound to a regional model
24 application), showed that the atmosphere 3.5 km above sea level (asl) is almost completely
25 depleted of particles during Etesians (Formenti et al., 2002). This study also confirmed that
26 additional quantities of aged aerosols from fossil fuel combustion and forest fires are
27 transported southward. Recently, four clustered airborne campaigns performed during a ten-
28 day period of strong northern winds (including Etesians), provided among others a unique
29 dataset including measurements of the chemical composition of submicron particles above the
30 AS and western Turkey. The first results from these measurements are selectively presented in
31 Bezantakos et al. (2013) and Tombrou et al. (2013; 2015).

1 The present study provides predictions of the size distribution and the chemical composition
2 of aerosol particles observed over the wider region of the Aegean Archipelago during the
3 same 10-day period (August - September 2011), taking full advantage of the aforementioned
4 airborne dataset and supportive ground-based aerosol observations. In order to capture more
5 efficiently the airflows over the Aegean basin, a comprehensive coupling of gases and
6 aerosols between the PMCAMx and GEOS-CHEM chemical transport models (CTM) is
7 performed and applied here for the first time. Outputs from the PMCAMx model are
8 compared against the complete set of experimental aerosol data, providing the most extensive
9 evaluation of aerosol simulation performances over a wide region of the Mediterranean basin.
10 The large number of prediction-observation pairs enables the investigation of the parameters
11 that significantly affect aerosol model performance. An inter-comparison among different
12 scenarios is performed with respect to the airborne observations, in order to improve
13 predictions of the organic aerosol fraction in the marine environment. This combined use of
14 CTMs and monitoring data, which is emphasized by the latest European air quality directive,
15 is taking advantage of the capabilities of the applied model system. The current model
16 applications presented here complement the newly existing aerosol dataset regarding the
17 origin and chemical ageing of the organic matter (primary, oxygenated, anthropogenic and
18 biogenic), the chemical composition and particle size distribution and the role of non-local
19 sources of air pollution on the mass of each aerosol species under different paths of northern
20 transport.

21

22 **2 Experimental Data**

23 **2.1 Airborne measurements**

24 Airborne data from four EUFAR (<http://www.eufar.net/>) campaigns (i.e. AEGEAN-GAME,
25 ACEMED, CarbonExp and CIMS) are utilized in this study. The measurements were
26 conducted using the UK BAe-146-301 Atmospheric Research Aircraft, which was operated
27 through the Facility for Airborne Atmospheric Measurements (FAAM,
28 <http://www.faam.ac.uk/>). Nine flights were performed between 31 August and 09 September
29 2011 (cf. Fig. 1). In all flights, the aircraft took off from and landed at the airport of Chania
30 (NW Crete). Five of the flights passed over the AS (1, 2, 4, and 7 September), one oriented
31 towards Thessaloniki passing over Athens (8 September), while for the rest the aircraft flew
32 over the western coast of Turkey up to the SW coast of the Black Sea. With the exception of

1 the last flight on 8 September, all flights were performed from 08:00 to 15:00 UTC. Flight
2 paths in the Greek airspace were at altitudes up to 5 km asl, while those over Turkey were
3 above 2 and up to 7.6 km asl.

4 The airborne measurements during these campaigns provided, among other atmospheric
5 parameters, the chemical composition of aerosols. High-time resolution measurements of the
6 sulfate (SO_4^{2-}), nitrate (NO_3^-), ammonium (NH_4^+), chloride (Cl^-) and organic (OA) content of
7 the sub-micron particles (PM_1) were performed by an airborne compact Time-of-Flight
8 Aerosol Mass Spectrometer (cToF-AMS) (Canagaratna et al., 2007; Morgan et al., 2010).
9 Aerosol mass concentrations are reported at ambient temperature and pressure (i.e. a
10 conversion from standard temperature and pressure to ambient conditions has been applied).
11 In common with other AMS measurements, these measurements nominally represent the
12 submicron, non-refractory component of the aerosols, therefore do not include any sulfate,
13 nitrate or chloride associated with sea salt or dust particles. The collection efficiency (CE) was
14 estimated based on the parameterisation described by Middlebrook et al. (2012), which was
15 close to unity based on the acidic nature of the particles. Because no on-board validation of
16 this chemical data was available (no other composition data was obtained and the possible
17 presence of sea salt particles would confound a comparison with the particle sizing
18 instruments), it is prudent to assign an uncertainty of ca. 30-35% to the AMS measurements,
19 as suggested by Bahreini et al. (2009).

20 Wind speed and direction, air temperature and water vapor mixing ratio were also available
21 and here used for model evaluation (Sect. 4.1). More information on the flights,
22 instrumentation and measured data during this period can be found in Bezantakos et al. (2013)
23 and Tombrou et al. (2015).

24 **2.2 Ground measurements**

25 Ground-based measurements of the chemical composition and physical properties of the
26 particles in the region were conducted at two remote stations located at Vigla (39°58'N,
27 25°04'E, 420 m asl) on the island of Lemnos and Finokalia, (35°20' N, 25°40' E, 150 m asl) on
28 the island of Crete, between 29.08 and 09.09.2011. Both sites are far from major cities and
29 local anthropogenic sources (Fig. 1a). To determine the aerosol chemical composition
30 observed at Vigla and Finokalia, particles were collected every 1, 6 or 8 hour using PM_{10} and
31 PM_1 samplers. The ground aerosol data used in this study are the PM_{10} elemental (EC) and

1 organic carbon (OC) (6 h samples), the PM₁ SO₄²⁻ (hourly samples) and the total PM₁₀ mass
2 (8 h samples).

3 OC and EC concentrations on the collected samples were measured with a Sunset lab
4 instrument (Sunset Laboratory Inc.; OR, USA) implemented with the EUSAAR-2 protocol
5 (Cavalli et al., 2010). Analytical procedures and detection limits of the methods are reported
6 in detail by Paraskevopoulou et al. (2014). Finally, measurements of anions in PM₁ were
7 performed at Finokalia using a Particle-into-Liquid-Sampler (PILS) (Orsini et al., 2003)
8 running at 15.5LPM and coupled with an Ion Chromatograph (IC). More information on the
9 PILS-IC settings used here are available in Sciare et al. (2011).

10 Wind speed, wind direction, as well as the concentrations of ozone (O₃) and nitrogen oxides
11 (NO_x: NO+NO₂) measured at the Finokalia station are also used herein (cf. Sect. 4.1).

12

13 **3 Methodology**

14 **3.1 Model framework**

15 The model system used in this study is comprised of the regional aerosol model PMCAMx,
16 the regional meteorological model WRF/ARW (hereafter referred as WRF, Skamarock et al.,
17 2008) and the global chemistry transport model GEOS-CHEM (Bey et al., 2001), following
18 the methodology described by Tombrou et al. (2009). The setup of the models is given in
19 Table 1 and Sect. S1. All air quality model results presented in this study correspond to the
20 PMCAMx runs.

21 PMCAMx is the research version of a former version (v.4) of the publicly available 3D,
22 Eulerian chemical transport model CAMx (Environ, 2003). Aerosols therein, are represented
23 by a detailed chemical composition: potassium (K⁺), calcium (Ca²⁺), magnesium (Mg²⁺),
24 NH₄⁺, sodium (Na⁺), SO₄²⁻, NO₃, Cl⁻, water (H₂O), EC, reactive and inert primary organic
25 aerosols (APO and POA, respectively), oxidized APO (AOO) and secondary organic aerosols
26 of anthropogenic (ASOA) and biogenic (BSOA) origin. All these species are distributed over
27 ten discrete and internally mixed size sections, in the diameter range 0.04 to 40 μm (cut-off
28 diameters: 0.04, 0.08, 0.1, 0.3, 0.6, 1.2, 2.5, 5, 10, 20, 40 μm). This chemical and size
29 treatment results in 400 aerosol model components in total.

30 The aerosol related dynamical processes considered in PMCAMx include primary emissions,
31 new particle formation by nucleation, condensation, evaporation, wet and dry deposition,

1 coagulation and chemistry. The incorporated chemical modules are shown in Table 1. The
2 ageing rate constants for primary and secondary organic aerosols (both anthropogenic and
3 biogenic) are 4×10^{-11} and 1×10^{-11} $\text{cm}^3 \text{mol}^{-1} \text{s}^{-1}$, respectively (Murphy et al., 2011).

4 **3.2 Model coupling**

5 In the frame of this study, the two chemical models are coupled offline, so that GEOS-CHEM
6 provides concentrations for a series of species at the boundaries (lateral and top; BCs) of the
7 PMCAMx domain for each hour of the simulation period. A three-dimensional initialization
8 field (29 August 2011, 00:00 Local Standard Time; LST) is also extracted from GEOS-
9 CHEM and used by PMCAMx. Differences in the chemistry and spatial resolution used by
10 the two models demanded a chemical and three-dimensional matching between the two
11 models with respect to the gas and aerosol fields. The chemical linking between the two air
12 quality models (Table 2) involves 41 gaseous species (20 of which are VOCs) and 63 aerosol
13 species (SO_4^{2-} , NO_3^- , NH_4^+ , APO, ASOA, BSOA, EC, Na^+ , Cl^- , Mg^{2+} , Ca^{2+} and other,
14 distributed over the size bins treated by PMCAMx). A conversion factor of 2.1 was used to
15 calculate total organic aerosols (OA) from the OC GEOS-CHEM outputs, which value is
16 suitable for non-urban areas (Turpin and Lim, 2001) and has already been reported in the
17 literature for OA over Crete (Sciare et al., 2005; Hildbrandt et al., 2010). In order to assess the
18 relative contribution of the different OA precursors to the total SOA transported from outside
19 the PMCAMx modeling domain (GEOS-CHEM BCs), each of the five lumped SOA species
20 treated by the volatility basis set (VBS) scheme in PMCAMx is coupled to each unique
21 oxidative product treated by GEOS-CHEM (instead to that of the uniform distribution of their
22 mixture, Sect. 4.3). Sea-salt and dust species treated by GEOS-CHEM are chemically
23 resolved to the PMCAMx species following Athanasopoulou et al. (2008) and Kandler et al.
24 (2007), respectively (cf. Table 2).

25 The hourly meteorological fields provided offline by the WRF to the PMCAMx, include
26 horizontal wind speed, temperature, diffusion coefficients (K_v), pressure and water vapor,
27 cloud optical depth, cloud and precipitated water. K_v values are calculated directly during the
28 WRF run, and are then adjusted for the heights under 100 m, which is found to benefit air
29 quality predictions (Environ, 2011b). Minimum K_v value is set to $0.1 \text{ m}^2 \text{ s}^{-1}$.

30 **3.3 Simulations setup**

31 The PMCAMx simulation domain is the greater area of the Aegean Archipelago (Fig. 1a;
32 34.1 to 42.5°N , 18.4 to 29°E) with 0.056° (~ 6.2 km) horizontal grid resolution and 14 vertical

1 layers with their domain-averaged layer top at 20.9, 29.3, 69.7, 129, 169, 228, 531, 869, 1256,
2 1696, 2166, 3252, 4496 and 5758 m above ground level (agl). The simulations are realized
3 during the period from 29 August to 09 September 2011, so that they are directly comparable
4 with measurements. Model outputs are extracted on hourly basis. The first two days are used
5 as a spin-up.

6 Emissions from the anthropogenic, agricultural activities and forests used by the PMCAMx
7 model for the area of Greece are based on a National database provided by the Ministry of
8 Environment for the year 2002. The emission rates for the area of Turkey are retrieved from
9 the EMEP emission dataset ([http://www.ceip.at/webdab-emission-database/officially-
10 reported-emission-data/](http://www.ceip.at/webdab-emission-database/officially-reported-emission-data/)). Analytical information on the setup for the WRF and GEOS-CHEM
11 simulations, as well as on the emissions treated by the chemical models is given in the
12 Supplement (Sect. S1).

13 The standard model application that provides the base-case outputs follows the modeling
14 configuration described so far. The first applied scenario aims at investigating the exogenous
15 aerosol fraction over the Aegean Archipelago (trans-boundary pollution). This is captured by
16 the coupling between PMCAMx and GEOS-CHEM models and was identified through a
17 combination of two simulations: the standard run (i.e. BCs provided by GEOS-CHEM) and a
18 scenario with constant, minimum BCs (scenario 1). The different contribution to aerosol
19 levels from sources in Greece and the Turkish area (covered by the simulation domain) is
20 calculated by switching off the emissions from Turkey in scenario 1 (scenario 2) (Sect. 4.2 to
21 4.4).

22 To assess the sensitivity of organic aerosol simulation performance, a series of model
23 scenarios was performed. Here, results on the OA sensitivity to their ageing process are
24 presented, following previous model studies (Tsimpidi et al., 2010, Fountoukis et al., 2011):
25 one scenario with the BSOA ageing switched off (scenario 3) and another with the ASOA
26 ageing constant multiplied by four (scenario 4) (Sect. 4.3).

27 The sensitivity of simulated aerosol mass loading on modeled meteorology is also examined.
28 Apart from the standard model setup, where WRF uses the YSU planetary boundary layer
29 (PBL) parameterization (Table 1), two additional PMCAMx simulations were performed
30 using WRF inputs from an application with the Bougeault–Lacarrère (BOULAC) PBL
31 parameterization scheme (Bougeault and Lacarrère, 1989) (scenario 5) and with Quasi-
32 Normal Scale Elimination (QNSE) (Sukoriansky et al. 2005) (scenario 6). This selection was

1 based on wind speed differences between seven different PBL schemes (Dandou et al., 2014)
2 (Sect. 4.2 to 4.3).

3 In order to compare predicted versus measured nitrate aerosol fractions (i.e. using the AMS
4 data), a sea-salt aerosols free case was applied (scenario 7) (Sect. 4.5). A summary of all
5 model applications is given in Table 3.

6 **3.4 Model evaluation statistics**

7 Aerosol predictions are compared against AMS measurements using the statistical measures
8 of Mean Bias (MB) and Error (ME), Mean Fractional Bias (MFB) and Error (MFE),
9 Normalized Mean Bias (NMB) and Error (NME), Root Mean Square Error (RMSE), and
10 correlation coefficient (r and r^2). The formulas of these indices are given in Table S2. The
11 airborne observational data that fall within a computational cell during a model time step
12 (hour) are averaged, in order to be directly comparable with the model outputs.

13 In order to estimate which parameters systematically affect the model discrepancies, a
14 multiple linear regression was used for each aerosol species among the model biases and
15 basic, local variables (e.g. co-ordinates, day/flight, time, wind speed and wind direction).
16 Based on the regression results, paired samples were created between the model biases and
17 each parameter that significantly affects them (e.g. the model biases and the observed wind
18 speeds were paired and formed one sample).

19 Each of these paired samples were sub-divided in two samples, on the basis of thresholds
20 considering the model performance; i.e. the threshold is set for the parameter value where
21 performance goals are met (or not) for the ~75% of the predicted values of the one (or the
22 other) sub-sample. In particular, the threshold regarding altitude is estimated to be at 2.2 km,
23 close to the PBL height over the domain. Other thresholds set for the paired samples are the
24 longitude of 27° that separates the Aegean Sea from Turkey, the zero degree winds that divide
25 NW from NE sectors and the wind speed of 9 m s^{-1} . The statistical hypothesis tests (F- and t-
26 tests) confirmed that for all cases the two sub-samples were significantly different from each
27 other. This procedure specified under which conditions (e.g. wind speed values and direction)
28 aerosol model performance over the AS is systematically good or poor and is presented in
29 Sect. 4.2 to 4.4.

30

4 Results and discussion

The following sections analyze the model results with respect to the measurements. In parallel, measurement findings are supported by the capabilities of the current model system. Model outputs are thoroughly evaluated against airborne AMS and ground-based observations. MFB and MFE were selected as the most appropriate metrics to summarize aerosol model (PMCAMx) performance (Boylan and Russell, 2006). The calculated values are compared against the proposed goals and criteria for each aerosol species (Table S2), in order to characterize model performance as good (the level of accuracy that is considered to be close to the best a model can be expected to achieve) or average (the level of accuracy that is considered to be acceptable for modeling applications). When the standards are not met for one or more species, the model skills (with regard to these species) are characterized as poor, and the reasons for the model discrepancies are further investigated.

The WRF model was evaluated following the model-evaluation benchmarks suggested by Tesche et al. (2001) and Emery et al. (2001). In particular, Mean Absolute Gross Error (MAGE), MB, RMSE and Index of Agreement (IA) are compared against the proposed benchmark values (Table S2).

4.1 Meteorology and gas-phase chemistry

Strong northerly winds dominated during the simulated period, as also shown by Tombrou et al. (2015). In most cases, both the predicted and the observed winds were NE and NW, which seems to depend on the latitude. Nevertheless, local surface winds observed at the site of Finokalia exhibit a strong western component (Fig. S1a). This pattern is attributed to the effect of local topography, while predictions reflect a representative value of a grid cell (an area of $\sim 38 \text{ km}^2$), mainly covered by sea.

An overall good agreement is found between the airborne measured and simulated values over the Archipelago, as far as humidity, air temperature and wind direction are concerned (cf. Table S3). Regarding wind speed, model performance is weaker (2 out of the 3 proposed benchmarks are reached, as shown in Table S2). The predicted mean value (8.0 m s^{-1}) along all flight tracks is in good agreement with the measured one (8.4 m s^{-1} ; Table S3). More specifically, the average (maximum) predicted value was 9.0 (16.5) and 7.5 (19.5) m s^{-1} upon the flight tracks below and above 2.2 km asl , respectively. The corresponding measured wind speeds were 9.7 (22.4) and 7.8 (24.1) m s^{-1} . As far as the surface-wind speed (at 10 m agl) is concerned, the 9-day average (minimum to maximum) surface wind speed predictions at

1 Finokalia were 7.5 (3.0 to 10.7) m s^{-1} , while the respective measurements were 6.8 (1.1 to 9.1)
2 m s^{-1} . The different scale between point measurements and model results, which represent
3 volume averages, contributes to this divergence.

4 On 4 and 7 September 2011 were typical Etesian days with strong-channeled northeasterly
5 surface winds ($> 15 \text{ m s}^{-1}$) over the Archipelago (Tyrlis and Lelieveld, 2012). Under such
6 conditions, the afternoon marine atmospheric boundary layer was around 1000, 700 and 500
7 m in the north, SW and SE Aegean, respectively, successfully represented by the PBL
8 schemes used in this study (Tombrou et al., 2015; Dandou et al., 2014).

9 Gas-phase comparisons between PMCAMx and ground concentration measurements do not
10 exhibit any significant inconsistencies. The 12-day average (minimum to maximum) NO_x and
11 O_3 predictions at Finokalia were 0.4 (0.1 to 2.8) and 62 (42 to 72) ppbv, while the respective
12 measurements were 0.5 (0 to 1.4) and 66 (41 to 89) ppbv. The temporal correlation between
13 predictions and measurements is also good, i.e. NME of the hourly data series is 55 and 10%,
14 respectively (Fig. S1b and c).

15 Overall, the aerosol model performance during the studied period is independent of any
16 systematic and important meteorological and/or gaseous inconsistencies.

17 **4.2 Sulfate aerosols ($\text{PM}_1 \text{ SO}_4$)**

18 *Model evaluation.* Figure 2a shows all available prediction-observation pairs of the airborne
19 $\text{PM}_1 \text{ SO}_4$ in the greater area of the Archipelago. The average profile of airborne sulfate is
20 rather homogeneous up to 2.2 km asl and shows average modeled (measured) concentration of
21 5.8 (5.5) $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. Concentrations smoothly decline aloft, reaching lower values ($< 1 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$)
22 above 4.2 km. The high uniformity and content in the vertical is a first indication that the low
23 troposphere above the AS is a receptor of distant industrial plumes and medium-range
24 sources, especially under strong NE winds (Fig. S1a). This also explains the higher sulfate
25 concentration values in the lower troposphere above the AS (modeled: 5 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ and measured:
26 4.7 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$) than above Turkey (are 3.6 and 3.7 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, respectively).

27 The average model performance statistics have satisfactory values with 77% of the data pairs
28 being within the 2:1 and 1:2 lines (Table S3). The MFB and MFE, when compared with the
29 goals, rate the sulfate model system performance as good, with only 15% of the MFE values
30 calculated for each data pair being outside the criteria lines.

1 The good model performance is also supported by checking each ground data pairs. Figure 3
2 shows all predictions of PM₁ SO₄ against the respective available (PILS-IC) measurements
3 from ground level, while Table S4 embeds the average ground statistics. The average modeled
4 (measured) concentration is 5.9 (6.4) μg m⁻³, representative of the aforementioned domain-
5 wide average within the PBL over the Archipelago. Most of MFE values meet the criteria
6 with few outliers observed (14% of the cases). Evidently, there is no clear diurnal cycle of
7 sulfate during the studied period (Fig. 3). This is attributed to the lack of strong local sulfur
8 dioxide (SO₂) sources (Pikridas et al., 2010), as well as to the continuous dispersion of the
9 overflying plumes, during their transport over the sea.

10 Sulfate is the dominant species of the atmospheric aerosols, as indicated both by observations
11 and predictions. This is in line with the majority of earlier long term observations and
12 campaigns in the region (Sciare et al., 2008; Pikridas et al., 2010; Im et al., 2012). PM₁ SO₄
13 production is related to its gaseous precursors (SO₂) mostly emitted from the industrialized
14 areas in the Balkans, Turkey and E. Europe (Sciare et al., 2003a, b; Pikridas et al., 2010),
15 which is converted to sulfuric acid (H₂SO₄) that has low vapor pressure and nucleates or
16 condenses mainly in the aerosol fine mode (Mihalopoulos et al., 2007). The satisfactory
17 comparison between model predictions and spatially divergent observations of sulfate over
18 the greater area of the AS proves the good representation of its sources and processes in the
19 applied model system.

20 *Exogenous influences.* Confidence in this model system allows the provision of
21 supplementary information on the role of sulfur transport from outside the PMCAMx domain,
22 not provided by the measurements. The origin of sulfate from the hot spot regions upwind the
23 Archipelago is tracked by the calculation of the transported mass to the total PM₁ SO₄
24 predictions (standard run – scenario 1, light red shaded area in Fig. 3). It is found that a
25 notable part of area-wide episodic events is attributed by about 85% to trans-boundary
26 transport of sulfate particles and its gaseous precursor during most of the studied period. The
27 spatial distribution of daily mean sulfate concentrations over the domain of interest together
28 with the contribution of the trans-boundary transport (standard run – scenario 1, iso-lines) is
29 given for a representative Etesian day (Fig. 4a). The exact origin of SO₄, determined by back-
30 trajectory calculations (Bezantakos et al., 2013), is the Eastern Europe and the wider Black
31 Sea region. The remaining 10 – 15% SO₄ of PM₁ is equally formed by sulfur emissions in the

1 western continental part of Greece and sources in the Turkish area of the domain (scenario 2-
2 scenario 1, not shown).

3 A different pattern is observed on 31 August 2011, when the observed winds at Finokalia
4 change to NW (Fig. S1a). The concentration map of this episode indicates that the air parcels
5 passing over continental Greece (Athens and Peloponnese) head towards the south AS (Fig.
6 4b). During that day, trans-boundary pollution in the area is less important compared to the
7 rest of the studied period. In particular, the submicron sulfate over the south AS (Finokalia) is
8 equally shaped by the local (domain-wide) and by the exogenous sources, with the 80% of the
9 former originating from the Greek territory (scenario 2-scenario 1; not shown). Interestingly,
10 the peak values ($\sim 10 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$) at Finokalia observed during the sulfur transport from Greek
11 power plants towards the south AS (Fig. 3) are lower than those related to the transport from
12 the Balkans and from further NE ($\sim 12 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$). Model inconsistencies during this plume
13 transport (Fig. 3) are related to the strong gradient from near source to background, which is
14 not accurately resolved and captured by the model's grid resolution. The exogenous influence
15 on SO_4 concentrations in the N. Aegean remains high (70%) on 31 August and originates
16 from the continental area between the Black and the Caspian Sea (Bezantakos et al., 2013).

17 *Model performance issues.* The high spatial and temporal resolution of airborne
18 measurements, allows for an extended diagnostic evaluation and may help to better address
19 poor model system performance over the EM. Increased model discrepancies are mostly
20 attributable to the lower and the higher ends of airborne PM_{10} SO_4 concentrations distribution
21 (minimum and maximum observed values shown in Fig. 2a). Poor model performance for
22 lower aerosol concentrations is explained below, although being typical for aerosol
23 concentrations below $2 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ (Boylan and Russell, 2006). The largest model
24 underestimations occur mainly at the area of Chania, where measurements frequently exceed
25 $14 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. Measurements during take-offs and landings are contaminated by local airport
26 emissions, while predictions cannot ideally reproduce concentrated plumes, but are
27 representative of a much wider area ($\sim 38 \text{ km}^2$) and time scales (1 h). Indeed, sulfate model
28 predictions in the greater area of Chania (6 to $10 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$) are much closer to previous
29 measurements (7 to $9 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$) in a nearby, suburban area (Kopanakis et al., 2012). The
30 maximum sulfate aerosol concentration ($23.4 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$) is observed in the lower troposphere
31 ($\sim 1.7 \text{ km}$) over Athens (02 September 2011, around 10:00 UTC). Here, the model under-
32 prediction ($4.6 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$), is intensified by the narrow shape of Athens pollution plume
33 (relatively to the size of the model grid size), as well as by the spatial and temporal changes in

1 actual conditions and fuels used for transportation in the greater Athens area, that are not
2 captured in emission inventories.

3 For more in-depth examinations regarding model system skills for sulfate predictions, MFE
4 for airborne data are broken down for those parameters significantly affecting model
5 performance (Table 4). As shown in this table, sulfate model performance is not consistent
6 throughout the troposphere: it meets the goals at altitudes lower than 2.2 km asl, but is poor at
7 higher altitudes. This is more pronounced over Turkey (25% of the total number of data pairs
8 over 27 to 29 °E, correspond to altitudes from 4 to 7 km asl) and it is because a few large
9 deviations between low concentration values (below 1 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$) can have a significant impact
10 on the overall performance assessment.

11 The other two parameters affecting sulfate model skills are related to the wind conditions.
12 Good model performance is observed under strong ($> 9 \text{ m s}^{-1}$) NE winds above the
13 Archipelago (local measurements along the flight tracks), that are typical of an Etesian pattern
14 (Tombrou et al., 2015). Under NW and/or winds of lower intensity, sulfate predictions are still
15 acceptable. The sensitivity of sulfate on the simulated wind is further examined by scenarios 5
16 (BOULAC PBL scheme) and 6 (QNSE PBL scheme), providing the lowest and strongest
17 wind speeds respectively, below 2.2 km altitude. The average value inside the PBL layer
18 ranges between 5.3 and 5.8 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, for an average wind speed variation from 8.6 (BOULAC)
19 to 9.8 (QNSE) m s^{-1} (below 2.2 km altitude) among the runs. Changes among concentration
20 fields are anti-correlated with the wind fields, due to the higher dispersion of pollution that is
21 associated with stronger winds. The aerosol model skills are rather insensitive to these
22 variations, although scenario 6 exhibited the lowest MFB and MFE values (12.9 and 56.3%,
23 respectively) and the highest correlation with measurements ($r^2 = 0.4$). Lastly, sulfate
24 predictions showed a similar performance for all days (flights), independently of the time of
25 day and latitude.

26 **4.3 Organic aerosols (PM₁ OA and PM₁₀ OC)**

27 *Model evaluation.* Experimentally determined concentrations of the organic fraction of the
28 submicron particles over the AS (Fig. 2b) are much lower than sulfate. In particular, the
29 average measured concentration below 2.2 km asl is 4.2 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, with peaks ranging from 7 to
30 11 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. Similar findings have been previously observed in the AMS measurements at
31 Finokalia (Hildebrandt et al., 2010; Pikridas et al., 2010).

1 Measurements of organic compounds over the Archipelago below 2.2 km altitude are
2 moderately underestimated by this model system (average predicted PM₁ OA value is 2.3 µg
3 m⁻³), which is consistent with findings reported by many modeling studies (e.g. Zhang et al.,
4 2014 and references therein). Also, the comparison of GEOS-CHEM results with integrated
5 global airborne observations resulted in the underestimation of the median OA concentrations
6 in 13 of the 17 aircraft campaigns over central Europe, north America and western Africa
7 (Heald et al., 2011). The main reasons for such underestimations are the poor model
8 representation of SOA, as well as the lack of additional sources and sinks of OA. Regarding
9 the former, the VBS mechanism in PMCAMx has been shown to be competent enough to
10 predict realistic levels of PM₁ OA over the south Aegean Archipelago (Fountoukis et al.,
11 2011; 2014). With respect to the sources and sinks, the most probable reason for the OA
12 underestimation found in this study is the missing representation of fire emissions for the
13 current model application. Biomass burning plumes may enter the free troposphere and be
14 advected over very long distances, especially under strong winds. Back trajectory calculations
15 from 400 to 4500 m asl (Bezantakos et al., 2013) show that the air masses arriving over the
16 Archipelago during the studied period, originate from (or pass over) the eastern Balkan area
17 and the west coastline of the Black Sea, where several fire spots are located during (and prior
18 to) the study period (Fig. S2). The regional (“diffuse”) biomass burning influence on OA
19 concentrations over the AS is found to reach up to 50% (Sciare et al., 2008; Bougiatioti et al.,
20 2014), a value which is similar to the underestimation of the OA mass by the current
21 application (i.e. around 54%).

22 The calculated organic aerosol model skills in the PBL show an acceptable performance, with
23 the 58% of the model predictions meeting the performance criteria (Table S3). Also, PBL
24 model predictions are better correlated to the observed aerosol distribution for organics ($r^2 =$
25 0.6) than for sulfate ($r^2 = 0.3$). This can be explained by the fact that the injection heights of
26 the sulfuric compounds emitted from the industry range from 0 to 1 km agl (e.g. Mailler et al.,
27 2013), whereas the large oxygenated fraction of organics in the AS troposphere creates a more
28 homogeneous field.

29 Modeled organic concentrations (PM₁₀ OA) are divided here by a factor of 2.1, to extract the
30 organic carbon mass concentrations over non-urban areas (see explanation in Sect. 3.2), which
31 can be compared to ground PM₁₀ OC measurements. Model performance is good (Fig. 5 and
32 Table S4), with the 41 (82) % of the model predictions meeting the performance goals

1 (criteria). The average PM₁₀ OC concentration values are similar over the north and south AS
2 (2.3 and 2.9 µg m⁻³, respectively), indicating the absence of major local OA sources, which
3 can also explain the smaller range of their spatial variability.

4 *OA analysis.* The experimental data obtained during this study cannot separate SOA from OA,
5 their biogenic from their anthropogenic part, as well as the fine from the coarse organic PM₁₀
6 fraction. Model outputs are used to help untangle these contributions cf. Fig. 5). Similar
7 predictions over both measurement sites, suggest again the large spatial homogeneity of
8 organic particles over the Archipelago. Up to 40% of PM₁₀ organics are located between 1
9 and 10 µm (which is slightly higher compared to the 25% experimentally determined at
10 Finokalia by Sciare et al., 2003a), the 75% of which is coarse (PM_{2.5-10}). Submicron OA over
11 the AS are mainly secondary (95%) and originate primarily (80%) from biogenic sources,
12 which is explained in the next paragraph. Most of these results are consistent with previous
13 studies covering the region of the AS (Hildebrandt et al., 2010; Athanasopoulou et al., 2013),
14 and are explained by the aged nature of the OA over the sea, especially during the summer
15 period.

16 *Exogenous influences.* Organic aerosol mass and gaseous (VOC) precursors from the Balkans
17 and further north, shapes more than 90% of their total concentration levels over the AS during
18 the Etesian event (Fig. 4c). The effect of organic-rich plumes from continental Greece during
19 the non-Etesian event (with prevailing NW winds, Fig. 4d), as well as the domain-wide
20 photochemistry, decrease slightly the role of exogenous sources (now 70% on average) over
21 the whole region of the AS. Examining the different chemical constituents of the transported
22 SOA and precursors (34 to 41 gaseous and 4 to 11 aerosol paired species as listed in Table 2)
23 in the studied domain, shows that the exogenous organic mass is primarily originating from
24 isoprene (mean NE boundary concentration values of 1 to 2 µg m⁻³), while aromatics are 2 to
25 6 times lower. The rest transported organic species (α-pinene, myrcene, sesquiterpenes etc) are
26 insignificant.

27 *Model performance issues.* Regarding the sensitivity of OA concentration performance, most
28 of the applied model scenarios (changes in road transport, maritime and industrial emissions)
29 showed either insignificant changes in the organic aerosol predictions, or (when boundary
30 concentrations were increased) unrealistic OA concentration results. These findings further
31 support that fire activity is the main deficiency in the current model application with respect to
32 organic aerosols. In addition and unlike previous findings in the area of study (Fountoukis et

1 al., 2011), our results indicate that the activation of the BSOA chemical ageing (standard run)
2 leads to a significant improvement of the OA levels over the Aegean Sea (continuous green
3 line in Fig. 2b). In particular, the BSOA oxidation in the Aegean troposphere increases by 50
4 to 80 % the total OA mass predictions during the whole simulation period. The reason that
5 BSOA are likely to undergo atmospheric ageing lies in the sufficient quantities of
6 anthropogenic nitrogen and sulfur pollutants in the atmosphere over the AS ($\text{NO}_x = 1$ to 2
7 ppb, mean molar ratio $\text{NH}_4^+/\text{SO}_4 \leq 2$), which facilitates BSOA oxidation (Zhao et al., 2013,
8 and references therein). As a consequence, deactivating BSOA ageing (scenario 3, dotted
9 green line in Fig. 2b) changed the model skills for organics from average to poor (average
10 predicted value from scenario 3 is $0.7 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ for the atmosphere up to 2.2 km asl over the
11 AS).

12 The sensitivity of model results on ASOA ageing was limited to 5% both for the average OA
13 concentration predictions and chemical composition (standard run-scenario 4). In particular,
14 the faster rate of the oxidation of anthropogenic SOA resulted in a minor increase (up to 10%)
15 of the predicted OA during the whole simulation period of scenario 4. Such a different model
16 response to BSOA/ASOA changes stems from the isoprene/aromatics concentration ratio
17 from GEOS-CHEM, which takes the average value of 9/1 over the Aegean. Scenario 4 had a
18 positive though minor effect on performance metrics.

19 The calculated statistics for the paired sampling for airborne organics (Table 4) showed results
20 similar to sulfate. In particular, unlike previous comparative results (Heald et al., 2011), it is
21 found here that the differences between modeled and observed OA concentrations are not
22 consistent throughout the troposphere. The poor model performance in the upper atmosphere
23 and especially in the area above Turkey (elevated flight paths, low concentration values, as
24 described in the previous section), deteriorates the overall organic model performance.

25 Wind also affects the quality of organic aerosol predictions, but only regarding direction. In
26 particular, observation and model values show an average difference of $1.3 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ under NE
27 winds, while this difference is lower ($0.6 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$) under NW winds. This is again attributed to
28 fire plumes, which are mainly transported from NE, but are not represented in the current
29 model application. The day, time of day, latitude and wind speed do not affect organic aerosol
30 model performance. The latter is also confirmed by scenarios 5 and 6 (MFE = 72 to 80%),
31 although scenario 5, which was based on slightly lower winds (i.e. lower dispersion),

1 produced slightly higher concentration values having the subsequent (though minor) reduced
2 model bias.

3 **4.4 Ammonium aerosols (PM₁ NH₄)**

4 The hourly variation of airborne ammonium concentration predictions is consistent with the
5 observations (Fig. 2c). Apart from the expected and already discussed inconsistencies in the
6 observed peak values, performance issues are tied with sulfate inconsistencies (e.g. during 04
7 September 11). This is related to the fact that during summer most of the ammonium is
8 associated with the sulfate rather than the nitrate fraction.

9 The average predicted (observed) PBL concentration of PM₁ NH₄ is 1.6 (1.4) $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, which is
10 consistent with the ground ammonium concentrations in earlier measurements at Finokalia
11 (Kouvarakis et al., 2001; Metzger et al., 2006; Pikridas et al., 2010). Regardless of the high
12 uncertainties in ammonia emissions usually incorporated in the photochemical models (Skjøth
13 et al., 2011), the reproduction of the observed data by the current model system is high, i.e.
14 the 70 (79) % of the MFE values meets the goals (criteria). The overall model performance for
15 the ammonium species is good and optimized over the Archipelago and under strong winds
16 (Table 4). The rest of the examined parameters (flight/day, time of day, altitude, latitude and
17 wind direction) do not seem to affect model performance with respect to ammonium.

18 Air parcels arriving in the simulation domain are predicted to contribute ca. 70% of the
19 average PM₁ NH₄ concentrations when originating from NE direction (Fig. 4e) and by a lower
20 percentage (though above 50%) when originating from NW (Fig. 4f).

21 **4.5 Nitrate and chloride aerosols (PM₁ NO₃ and Cl)**

22 The measured non-refractory submicron nitrate concentrations below 2.2 km asl (0.2 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ in
23 average) are strongly overestimated by the model system (1.9 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$) (as shown in Table S3).
24 This is attributed to two distinct reasons: the sea-salt component of nitrate (standard run-
25 scenario 7), which is not captured by the AMS measurements, accounts for the 54% of PM₁
26 NO₃⁻ predictions. Also, the average exogenous contribution from upwind (standard run-
27 scenario 1) is ca. 1 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, which is unrealistic according to current measurements. When
28 subtracting these mass fractions from total PM₁ NO₃ predictions, the model results become
29 more realistic. Nevertheless, it should be taken in mind, that performance issues are
30 commonly tied to low concentrations (< 1 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$) cases, not only because they greatly
31 degrade normalized model performance, but also due to the higher uncertainty of
32 measurements.

1 Measured (submicron non-refractory) and modeled chloride is low ($< 0.8 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$), because of
2 the insignificant sea-salt content in the submicron fraction, the inability of AMS to measure
3 sea-salt chloride, as well as its gradual displacement by nitrate and sulfate ions. Nevertheless,
4 model performance is found good (Table S3).

5 **4.6 Particulate elemental carbon (PM₁₀ EC)**

6 Figure 6 shows the diurnal variation of the PM₁₀ EC for the ground sites of the south and
7 north Aegean basin. Both the absolute values and their temporal evolution are well
8 reproduced by the model. In particular, the average measured (and modeled) concentration is
9 ca. $0.3 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, and therefore the model performance is rated as good (Table S4), with a few
10 exceptional outliers. Elemental carbon is dominated by combustion sources. Thus, it can be
11 assumed that the fossil fuel sources are well represented by the emission datasets used by this
12 model system.

13 As for sulfate, the footprint of continental Greek sources (mainly from the Athens
14 metropolitan area) is apparent in EC concentrations at Finokalia during the prevailing NW
15 directions (0.6 to $1.2 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$). During the rest of the period, EC levels fluctuate in similar
16 levels at both sites.

17 The OC/EC ratio from the measured (modeled) data during this period is as high as 4.7 (4.0)
18 and 4.0 (7.1) at the north (Vigla) and south (Finokalia) AS (Fig. 6), being at similar levels
19 with those measured previously Finokalia (Koulouri et al., 2008; Pikridas et al., 2010; Im et
20 al., 2012). OC/EC slopes greater than 2, suggest the significant fraction of secondary species
21 in the organic aerosol mass in background areas, as predicted and previously discussed in
22 section 4.3. The lower OC/EC slope at Finokalia during 31 August (1.9) is close to previous
23 findings in urban areas (Favez et al., 2008; Theodosi et al., 2010) and is related to the higher
24 EC levels during the urban plume transport from NW. The latter was also depicted in the
25 spatial distribution of sulfate (Fig. 4b).

26 **4.7 Particulate matter (PM₁₀)**

27 The average predicted total PM₁₀ mass at Finokalia during the simulated period is found 30.1
28 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. This value is very close to the average of the concurrent observations ($29 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$), as
29 well as to previous measurements in non-urban areas of the Mediterranean region (Rodriguez
30 et al., 2001; Gerasopoulos et al., 2006; Lazaridis et al., 2008; Koulouri et al., 2008; Kopanakis
31 et al., 2012). The performance skills of the model system on PM₁₀ predictions are rated as
32 good (Table S4) and the daily evolution of PM₁₀ predictions is satisfactory (Fig. 7). Atypically

1 high PM₁₀ concentration levels observed at Finokalia on 1 September suggest that the quality
2 of sampling on this particular day might be questionable.

3 The combined use of measurement and modeling techniques during this period is useful for
4 the estimation of the chemical composition and the size distribution of PM₁₀ measurements at
5 Finokalia (Fig. 7). Sulfate account for the 45% of PM₁ mass, followed by OM. The latter
6 represents the 20% of PM₁ (2.6 μg m⁻³), which is similar to measurements at Finokalia
7 (Pikridas et al., 2010). The predicted submicron ammonium content at Finokalia (1.7 μg m⁻³)
8 is consistent either with the current airborne or with the past ground-based observations at this
9 site (Sect. 4.4). The contribution of the rest aerosol species (Cl and EC) is minor (2%). The
10 levels of the submicron nitrate are greatly overestimated by the model system (Sect. 4.5).

11 Submicron aerosol is the largest fraction of the PM_{2.5} mass (76%), but accounts for the 42%
12 of total PM₁₀. This is mostly related to the elevated coarse aerosol concentrations (14.2 μg m⁻³)
13 ³), which shape the PM_{2.5}/PM₁₀ ratio around 54%. Previous ground-based observations over
14 the EM have resulted in fractions ca. 50% (Kanakidou et al., 2011), further supporting the
15 satisfactory aerosol predictions over the whole size range by this model system.

16 Given the similar levels of ground and airborne measurements over the AS and below 2.2 km
17 asl (discussed in Sect. 4.2-4.5), it can be stated that the current analysis of the ground PM₁₀
18 measurements performed by the model, is representative of the PBL above the Archipelago
19 during strong northern winds.

21 **5 Summary and conclusions**

22 A recently applied model system consisting of three well-established atmospheric models
23 (namely, PMCAMx, WRF and GEOS-CHEM), and a unique aerosol dataset collected in the
24 EM are synergistically used in the frame of this study during a 10-day period characterized by
25 strong northern winds (August-September, 2011). The aircraft dataset used represents a
26 spatially diverse set of aerosol observations (covering the horizontal area of ca. 3×10⁵ km² and
27 extending from the sea surface to 7.5 km aloft), employed to perform the most extensive –to
28 our knowledge– model evaluation of major aerosol chemical component concentrations over
29 the EM to date (> 1300 observation-prediction samples per species).

30 The vertical resolution in the measurements allowed the exploration of the aerosol profiles
31 above the Aegean Sea. The PBL above the Archipelago (< 2.2 km asl) is homogeneously

1 enriched in sulfate (average modeled and measured $\text{PM}_{10} \text{SO}_4$ of 5.5 and 5.8 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$,
2 respectively), followed by organics (2.3 and 4.4 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$) and ammonium (1.5 and 1.7 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$).
3 Aerosol concentrations smoothly decline aloft reaching low values ($< 1 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$) above 4.2 km.
4 Aerosol model performance within the PBL is largely within an acceptable level of accuracy
5 (for all major chemical species except from nitrate), or even close to the best level of accuracy
6 (sulfate, ammonium and chloride satisfy the criteria), with 50 to 80% reproduction of these
7 standards. Comparison with the ground-based observations (356 observation-prediction
8 samples in total) suggested an even higher model quality, with a good reproducibility of all
9 studied species and a few outliers ($< 15\%$ outside the criteria lines).

10 Wide and commonly found under-predictions in sulfate, elemental carbon and coarse aerosols
11 (cf. Nopmongkol et al., 2012) are not observed in the current study. Also, in contrast to the
12 uncertainties in ammonia emissions usually reported in air quality modeling (e.g. Skjøth et al.,
13 2011), the observed ammonium levels are well reproduced here. These findings support that
14 the power plants, motorways and natural aerosol sources, including agricultural activities of
15 the surrounding area of the Archipelago and upwind are well represented and treated by this
16 model system.

17 Relatively high OC/EC ratios (4 to 5) from the ground observations are successively
18 reproduced by the PMCAMx model (OC/EC: 4 to 7), suggesting the large oxygenation rate of
19 the organic matter above the Archipelago, nicely represented by the employed OA chemical
20 module. The activation of the chemical ageing of BSOA in this formulation, greatly improves
21 model performance due to the sufficient NO_x concentration and the sulfate-rich Aegean
22 environment. On the other hand, OA predictions showed minor (or unrealistic) response to
23 anthropogenic emissions and BCs variations. The fire activity, not taken into account by the
24 current model application, is the main cause of OA underestimation (around 54%), which is
25 consistent with local measurements of the fire-induced OA fraction (e.g. Bougiatioti et al.,
26 2014). This finding serves as a challenge for future model development.

27 Model performance was also dependent on the altitude (below and above 2.2 km), the
28 longitude (western and eastern than 27°E , i.e. above the AS and W. Turkey, respectively), the
29 wind speed (above and below 9 m s^{-1}) and wind direction (NE and NW) over the studied area.
30 The (time of) day and latitude did not affect model biases. The sensitivity of aerosol
31 predictions on different PBL schemes showed a minor effect on aerosol concentrations (e.g.
32 5.3 to 5.8 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ and 2.1 to 2.4 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ for airborne sulfate and organics, respectively), and did

1 not change model performance. Overall, aerosol predictions within the PBL over the
2 Archipelago under strong NE winds showed the best performance.

3 More than 70% of the predicted aerosol mass over the AS during the Etesians is associated
4 with the transport of aerosols and their precursors from outside the PMCAMx modeling
5 domain. In the case of organics, this mass originates primarily from the oxidation of isoprene.
6 These findings underline the significance of the detailed gaseous and aerosol model coupling
7 developed in this study, towards more accurate model predictions. The origin of the
8 transported plume during NW winds, distinctively identified from the model simulations
9 (Greek industrialized areas) and the daily evolution of sulfate, EC (and OC/EC) and total
10 PM_{10} , shapes half of the total sulfate mass, the rest being attributed to the exogenous sources.
11 Also, the observed peak in submicron sulfate during this event at Finokalia ($10 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$) is
12 lower than the concentrations during the Etesian flow (12 to $14 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$). Therefore,
13 developing abatement strategies to reduce aerosol levels in the EM is both a national and
14 transnational task. Key findings from the current and similar applications can provide
15 information on the origin of air parcels and the contribution of local and exogenous sources,
16 thus on the effective design of air policies.

17 A forthcoming application of the same model system aims at investigating its performance, as
18 well as aerosol levels and interactions during recent Saharan dust intrusions in the troposphere
19 over the Aegean Sea.

20

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Table 1. Main characteristics of the WRF meso-scale meteorological model, the GEOS-Chem v8-03-01 global and the PMCAMx regional CTM applications.

	WRF	GEOS-Chem	PMCAMx
Chemical and Physical mechanisms	<u>Planetary boundary layer (PBL) parameterization</u> : YSU (Hong et al., 2006) (standard run). BOULAC (Bougeault and Lacarrère, 1989) and QNSE (Sukoriansky et al., 2005) are used in 2 additional scenarios.	NOx-Ox-hydrocarbon-aerosol species module (the SOA module by Chung and Seinfeld, 2002 and Henze et al., 2008 is included). The mechanism is combined to the ISORROPIA II aerosol thermodynamics (Fountoukis and Nenes, 2007).	Gaseous chemistry: SAPRC99 (Carter, 1990), Inorganic aerosol chemistry: ISORROPIA II (Fountoukis and Nenes, 2007), Organic aerosol chemistry: VBS (Shrivastava et al., 2008; Lane et al., 2008)
Initial, Lateral and Boundary conditions	National Centers for Environmental Prediction (NCEP) operational Global Final Analyses (1.0°×1.0°)	From the global GEOS-chem simulation (4.0°×5.0°)	From the global GEOS-chem simulation (0.5°×0.667°)
Input data	<u>Sea surface temperature (SST)</u> : Real-Time Global SST analysis data (0.5°×0.5°) <u>Land use categories</u> : 24 <u>Soil categories</u> : 16 (US Geological Survey)	<u>Anthropogenic emissions</u> : Wang et al., 1998; Benkovitz et al., 1996; Yevich and Logan, 2003; Piccot et al., 1992 <u>Natural emissions</u> : Price and Rind, 1992 <u>Meteorological data</u> : Goddard Earth Observing System (GEOS-5)/NASA Global Modeling and Assimilation Office	<u>Anthropogenic, agricultural, forests</u> : Hellenic Ministry of Environment (2002); EMEP <u>Sea-salt and dust</u> : Athanasopoulou et al., 2008; 2010 <u>Meteorological data</u> : from the WRF simulation (0.056°×0.056°)
Vertical grid	35 sigma levels (from ca.10 m agl to 50 hPa)	47 hybrid eta levels (from ca. 50 m agl to 0.01 hPa)	14 levels (from surface to ca. 5.8 km)
Parent and nesting domains (extended areas of)	A. Europe (0.5°×0.5°) B. Greece and Italy (0.167°×0.167°) C. Aegean Archipelago (0.056°×0.056°)	A. Global domain (4°×5°) B. Europe (0.5°×0.667°)	Aegean Archipelago (0.056°×0.056°)

Table 2. The chemical coupling (in ppb) between the PMCAMx (SAPRC, ISORROPIAII and VBS mechanisms) and the GEOS-CHEM (SOA mechanism) model. Aerosols are shown in bold. The numbers next to PMCAMx aerosol species correspond to their size bins. PM_{2.5} in PMCAMx corresponds to the bins 1 to 6, while the rest bins (7 to 10) are PM_{2.5-40}. Sea-salt aerosols (SSA) in GEOS-CHEM are simulated in two bins (effective diameter ranges 0.2 to 5 and 5 to 8 μm), while dust particles (DST) are split in 4 bins (effective diameters 1.4, 2.8, 4.8 and 9 μm).

No	PMCAMx	GEOS-CHEM	No	PMCAMx	GEOS-CHEM
1	NO ₂	NO _x	30	SO ₂	SO ₂
2	O ₃	NO _x - O _x	31	Sulfuric acid (SULF)	SULF+Methyl Sulfonic Acid
3	Peroxyacetyl (PAN)	Nitrate PAN	32	NH ₃	NH ₃
4	Higher peroxyacetyl nitrate	Lumped Peroxypropionyl Nitrate	33	Hydrogen Peroxide (H ₂ O ₂)	H ₂ O ₂
5	PAN compound from methacrolein	Peroxymethacroyl Nitrate	34-37	ASOA gaseous precursors (CAS1-4)	Oxidised aromatics
6	Organic nitrate	Lumped Alkyl Nitrate	38	BSOA gaseous precursors (CBS1)	Oxidised a-pinene, b-pinene, sabinene, carene, terpenoid ketones, limonene, terpenes
7	Peroxynitric acid (HNO ₄)	HNO ₄	39	BSOA gaseous precursors (CBS2)	Oxidised Myrcene, terpenoid alcohols, ocimene
8	Formaldehyde (HCHO)	HCHO	40	BSOA gaseous precursors (CBS3)	Oxidised Sesquiterpenes
9	Acetaldehyde (CCHO)	Acetaldehyde ALD2	41	BSOA gaseous precursors (CBS4)	Oxidised Isoprene
10	Higher aldehyde (RCHO)	RCHO	1-3	APO4-6	Organic carbon (OCPI+OCPO)
11	Isoprene (ISOP)	0.2ISOP	4-7	ASOA1-4	Aerosol aromatics
12	Methylvinyl ketone (MVK)	MVK	8	BSOA1	aerosol a-pinene etc
13	Methacrolein (METH)	Methacrolein (MACR)	9	BSOA2	aerosol myrcene etc

14	Terpene	A-pinene, B-pinene, sabinene, carene, terpenoid ketones, Limonene, Myrcene, terpenoid alcohols, ocimene	10	BSOA3	aerosol sesquiterpenes
15	HNO ₃	HNO ₃	11	BSOA4	aerosol isoprene
16	Acetone (ACET)	0.3ACET	12-14	PEC4-6	black carbon (BCPI+BCPO)
17	Methylethyl (MEK)	ketone 0.3MEK	15-20	NO ₃ 4-9	NO ₃ +ssNO ₃ +0.009SSA ₁₋₂
18	Methyl (COOH)	hydroperoxide Methyl hydroperoxide (MP)	21-23	NH ₄ 4-6	NH ₄
19	CO	CO	24-26	SO ₄ 4-6	SO ₄ +0.25ssSO ₄ +0.03SSA ₁
20	Lumped alkanes 1	0.5Ethane	27-29	SO ₄ 7-9	0.75ssSO ₄ +0.03SSA ₂
21	Lumped alkanes 2	0.33Propane	30-35	Cl 4-9	0.42SSA ₁₋₂ +0.01DST ₁₋₄
22	Lumped alkanes 3	0.09Lumped alkanes	36-38	Na 4-6	0.46SSA ₁ +0.05DST ₁₋₂
23	Lumped alkanes 4	0.09Lumped alkanes	39-41	Na 7-9	0.46SSA ₂ +0.04DST ₃₋₄
24	Lumped alkanes 5	0.09Lumped alkanes	42-44	Ca 4-6	0.009SSA ₁ +0.07DST ₁₋₂
25	Lumped aromatics 1	0.16Benzene +0.14Toluene	45-47	Ca 7-9	0.04DST ₃₋₄
26	Lumped aromatics 2	0.13Xylene	48-53	K 4-9	0.009SSA ₁₋₂ +0.03DST ₁₋₄
27	Lumped olefins 1	0.17Lumped alkenes	54-59	Mg 4-9	0.06SSA ₁₋₂ +0.05DST ₁₋₄
28	Lumped olefins 2	0.17Lumped alkenes	60	Si, Al (CRST6)	0.81DST ₁₋₂
29	N _x O _y	N ₂ O ₅	61-63	Si, Al (CRST7-9)	0.83DST ₃₋₄

Table 3. Description of the modeling scenarios performed by the PMCAMx model during 29 August – 09 September, 2011.

Scenario	Scenario's Description	Objective	Other information
Base-case	Standard run	Aerosol chemistry over the Aegean Archipelago (or Aegean Sea)	Inputs by WRF/YSU; PMCAMx/GEOS-CHEM coupling; SOA aging constant = $1 \times 10^{-11} \text{ cm}^3 \text{ mol}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$
1	Constant, minimum ^a boundary conditions	Exogenous/trans-boundary aerosol fraction	PMCAMx is not coupled with GEOS-CHEM
2	Scenario 1 without emissions from the Turkish area of the domain	Aerosol fraction from sources in Greece/Turkey (covered by the domain)	
3	BSOA aging switched off	Sensitivity of organic aerosol performance on SOA aging	Only 29 August – 02 September
4	ASOA aging $\times 4$		
5	Inputs by WRF/BOULAC	Sensitivity of aerosols on meteorology	YSU, BOULAC and QNSE schemes differ in the wind field predictions
6	Inputs by WRF/QNSE		
7	SSA-free simulation	Direct comparison of nitrate predictions and observations	AMS detects the non-refractory, submicron aerosol fraction

^a aerosol species concentrations are equal to $10^{-9} \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$

Table 4. Mean and Mean Fractional Error (MFE) values for the complete sample and for paired sub-samples of the airborne model-measurement dataset. Paired sampling is based on the methodology described in Sect. 3.4. MFE with bold italic (italic) fonts indicate good (poor) model performance, according to the selected evaluation criteria (cf. Table S2). The rest model outputs (MFE with black fonts) are acceptable (average model performance).

Airborne PM ₁	Sulfate ($\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$)		Ammonium ($\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$)		Organics ($\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$)	
PMCAMx mean (min-max)	4.8 (0.3-12.1)		1.1 (0.05-4.2)		1.4 (0.01-6.8)	
AMS mean (min-max)	5 (0.2-23.4)		1 (0.05-5.2)		2.4 (0.05-10.7)	
MFE (% meets goals/criteria)	55 (56/73)		63 (70/79)		83 (51)	
1 st pair of samples	< 2.2	> 2.2 km asl			< 2.2	> 2.2 km asl
PMCAMx mean (min-max)	5.5 (1.1-12.1)	3.8 (0.3-9.7)			2.3 (0.2-6.8)	0.9 (0.01-4.8)
AMS mean (min-max)	5.8 (0.2-23.4)	3.7 (0.2-15)			4.4 (0.1-10.7)	1.1 (0.05-9.4)
MFE (% meets goals/criteria)	44 (64/82)	72 (<50/59)			74 (<50/58)	89 (<50/50)
2 nd pair of samples	Aegean	Turkey	Aegean	Turkey	Aegean	Turkey
PMCAMx mean (min-max)	5 (0.5-12.1)	3.3 (0.3-10.7)	1.3 (0.06-4.2)	0.8 (0.05-2.7)	2 (0.1-5.6)	0.5 (0.01-4.8)
AMS mean (min-max)	4.7 (0.2-20.4)	3.5 (0.2-19.6)	1.1 (0.05-4)	0.4 (0.05-2)	3.4 (0.05-9.3)	0.7 (0.05-8)
MFE (% meets goals/criteria)	48 (63/79)	85 (<40/46)	54 (79/87)	71 (62/76)	77 (<60/60)	92 (<30/36)
3 rd pair of samples	NE	NW winds			NE	NW winds
PMCAMx mean (min-max)	5.4 (0.7-11.5)	4 (0.3/12.1)			1.9 (0.02-5.6)	1 (0.01-6.8)
AMS mean (min-max)	5.6 (0.2-23.4)	4.1 (0.2-20.4)			3.2 (0.05-10.4)	1.6 (0.05-10.7)
MFE (% meets goals/criteria)	51 (60/77)	61 (<60/69)			76 (<60/62)	89 (<40/42)
4 th pair of samples	U> 9	< 9 m/s	U> 9	< 9 m/s		
PMCAMx mean (min-max)	5.1 (0.4-12.1)	4.5 (0.3-11.3)	1.5 (0.06-4.2)	0.8 (0.05-3.1)		
AMS mean (min-max)	5.5 (0.2-23.4)	4.5 (0.2-20.42)	1.2 (0.05-4.3)	0.9 (0.05-5.2)		
MFE (% meets goals/criteria)	46 (62/82)	63 (<60/65)	52 (80/100)	71 (61/72)		

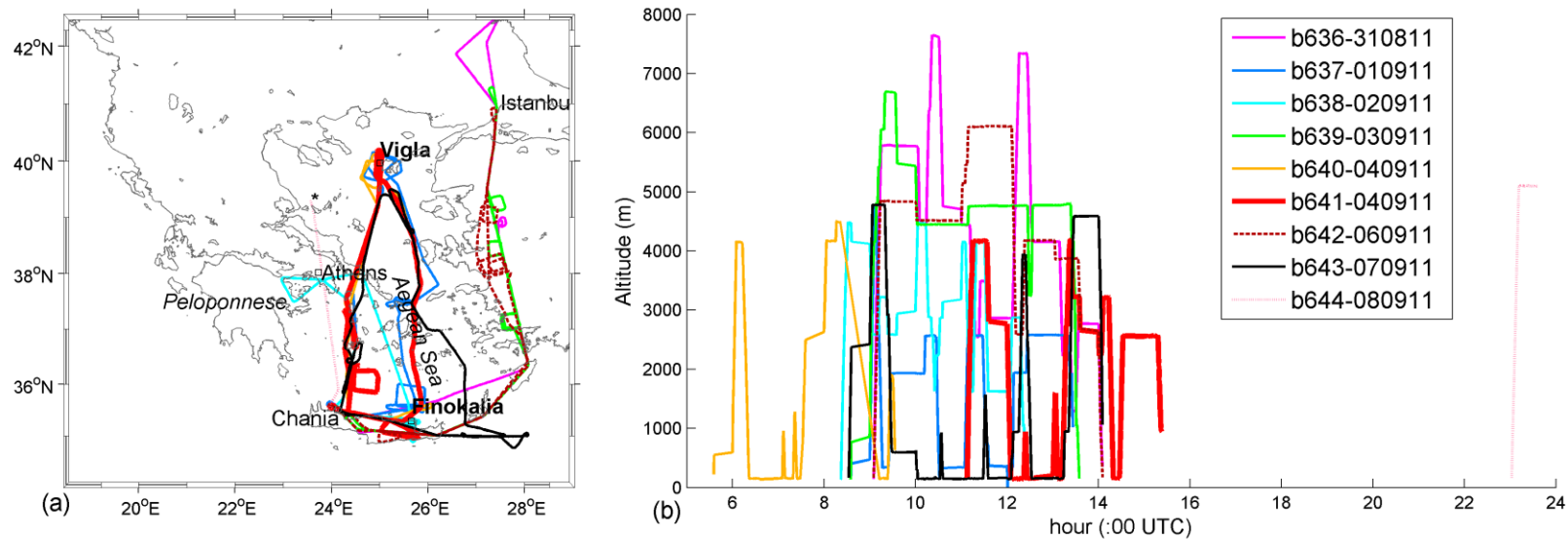


Figure 1. (a) Geographical map of the PMCAMx model domain covering the greater area of the Aegean Sea, showing also the trajectories for the nine flights during the modeling period (29 August – 09 September 2011). All flights took off and landed at the airport of Chania. The aircraft over the Aegean Sea moved anti-clockwise. The ground monitoring sites are indicated by the bold fonts. The rest indicate areas discussed within text. (b) The aircraft altitude during the time frame of each flight.

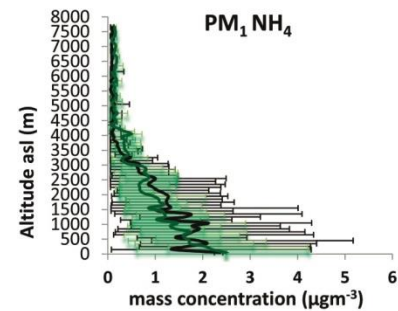
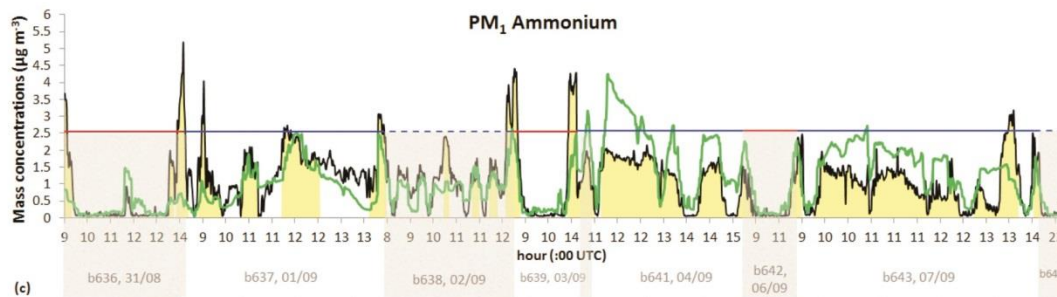
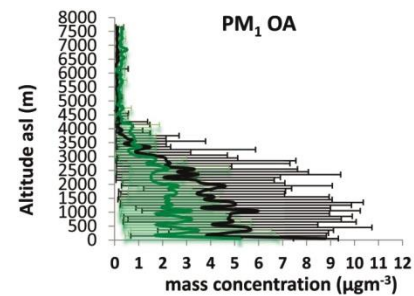
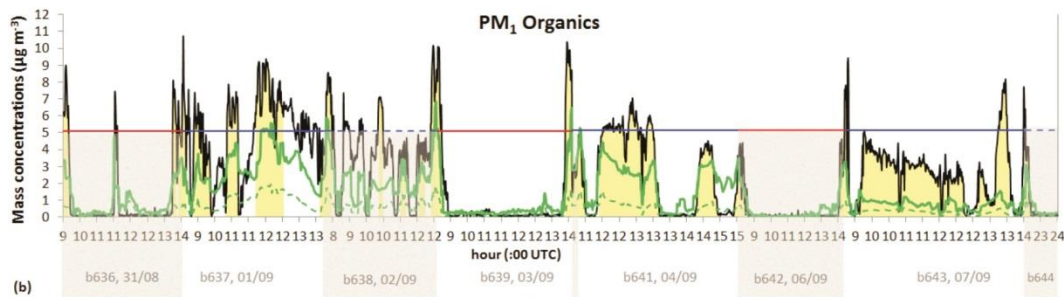
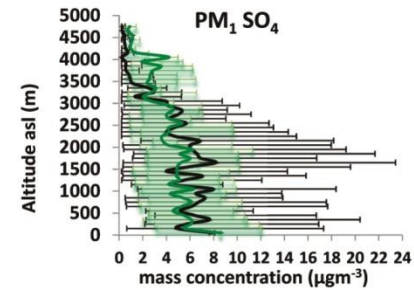
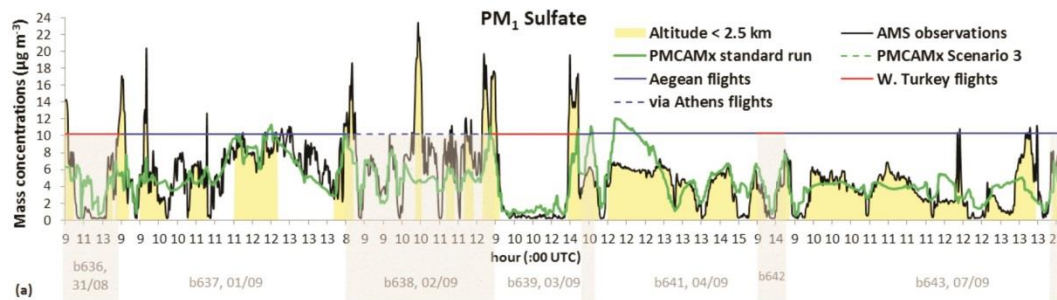


Figure. 2. Comparison of PMCAMx results (green continuous line) with AMS airborne measurements (black continuous line) for total PM₁: (a) Sulfate; the legend applies for all succeeding graphs, (b) Organics (green dashed line for scenario 3 is also shown), (c) Hourly particulate ammonium concentrations ($\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$) for all flights in the frame of the AEGEAN-GAME, ACEMED, CarbonExp and CIMS campaigns, during 31 August – 09 September 2011. Data from the flights over the Aegean Sea, via Athens and over west Turkey are discriminated by the horizontal blue, dashed-blue and red lines, respectively. The yellow shaded area indicates mass concentrations below 2.2 km asl. The flight numbers and dates are shown in the bottom. More detailed flight information is embedded in Fig. 1. On the right of each graph, the vertical profile of each species averaged per 100 m (error bars with minimum and maximum values) is shown.

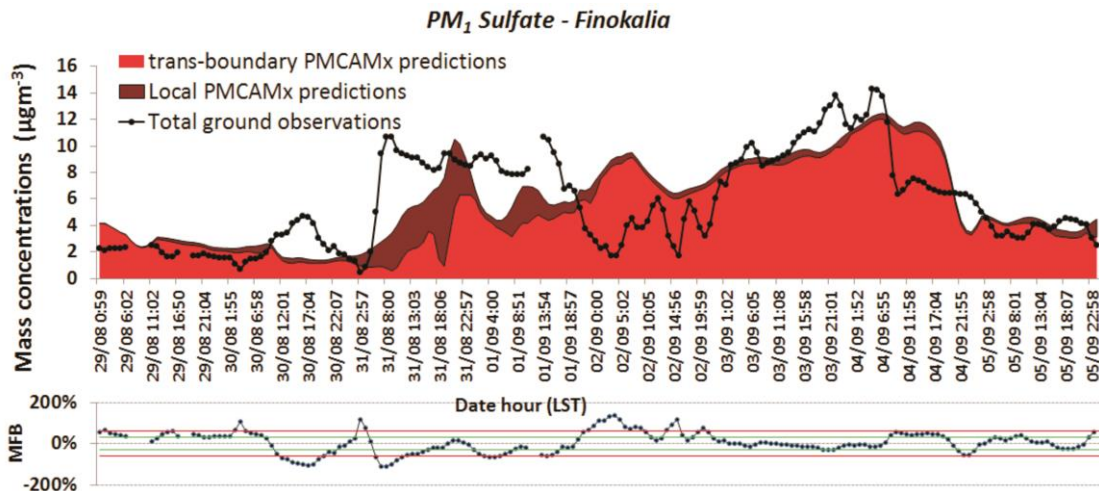


Figure 3. Comparison of PMCAMx (total shaded area) with hourly measurements (black dotted line) of total PM₁ sulfate concentrations ($\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$) over Finokalia during 31 August – 09 September 2011. The contribution of PMCAMx predicted trans-boundary (standard run - scenario 1, in light red) and local (scenario 1, in dark red) to the total PM₁ sulfate mass is also shown. The ability of the model to reproduce observations is estimated through the calculation of the Mean Fractional Biases (MFB), shown in the bottom. Model performance is average (good), when MFB values are within the red (green) lines (Boylan and Russell, 2006).

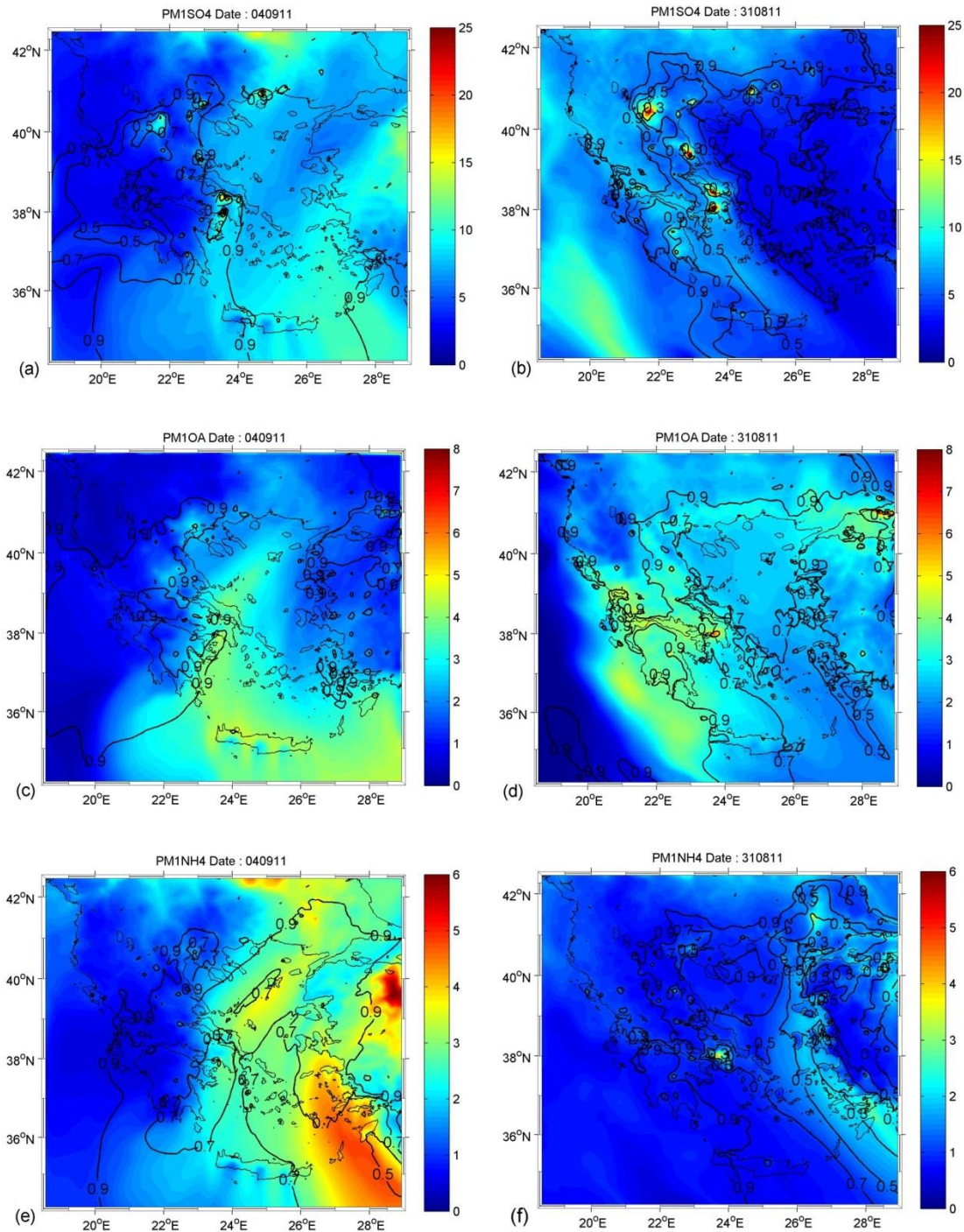


Figure 4. Daily average PM₁ lowest level concentration fields ($\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$) of sulfate, organics and ammonium species, during: (a), (c), (e) NE winds (04 September 2011) and (b), (d), (f) NW winds (31 August 2011), blowing over the Aegean Sea. Iso-lines show the contribution of trans-boundary sources to the total aerosol mass [(standard run – scenario1)/standard run].

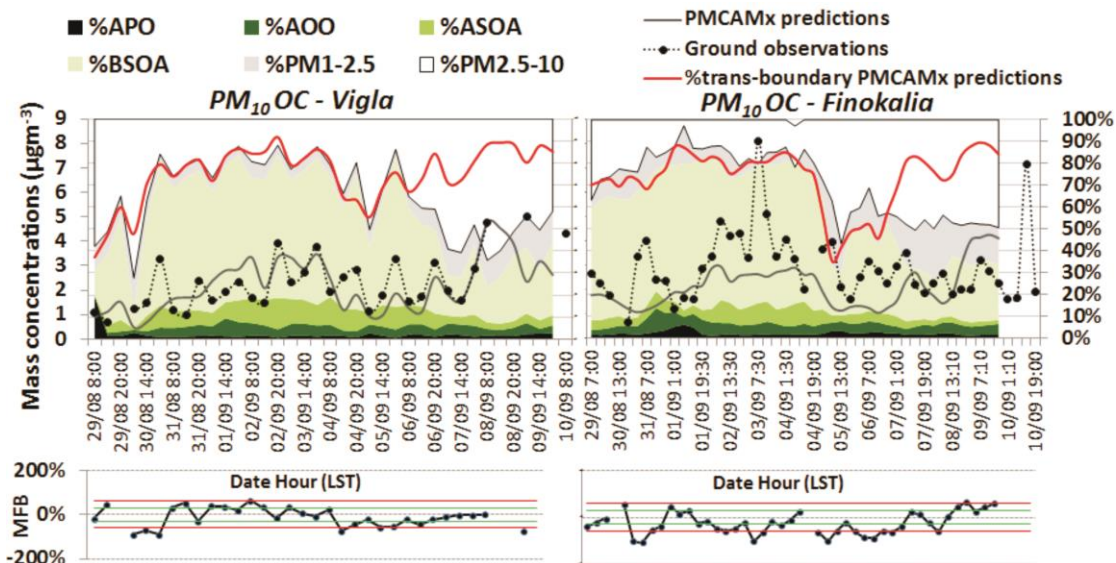


Figure 5. Comparison of PMCAMx (grey lines) with 6-hour measurements (black dotted line) of total PM₁₀ OC concentrations ($\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$) over Vigla (left) and Finokalia (right) during 31 August – 09 September 2011. The relative contribution of PMCAMx predicted trans-boundary (standard run - scenario 1, red line) to the total PM₁₀ OA mass is also shown. Green shaded areas represent the chemical composition of PM₁ OA predictions, grey shaded area shows the organics in the PM_{1-2.5} size range, while the remaining (white shaded area) represents the organics in the coarse fraction (PM_{2.5-10}). All areas are percentage values. The ability of the model to reproduce observations is estimated through the calculation of the Mean Fractional Biases (MFB), shown in the bottom. Model performance is average (good), when MFB values are within the red (green) lines (Boylan and Russell, 2006). The predicted OC is acquired by dividing OA with 2.1 (Turpin and Lim, 2001).

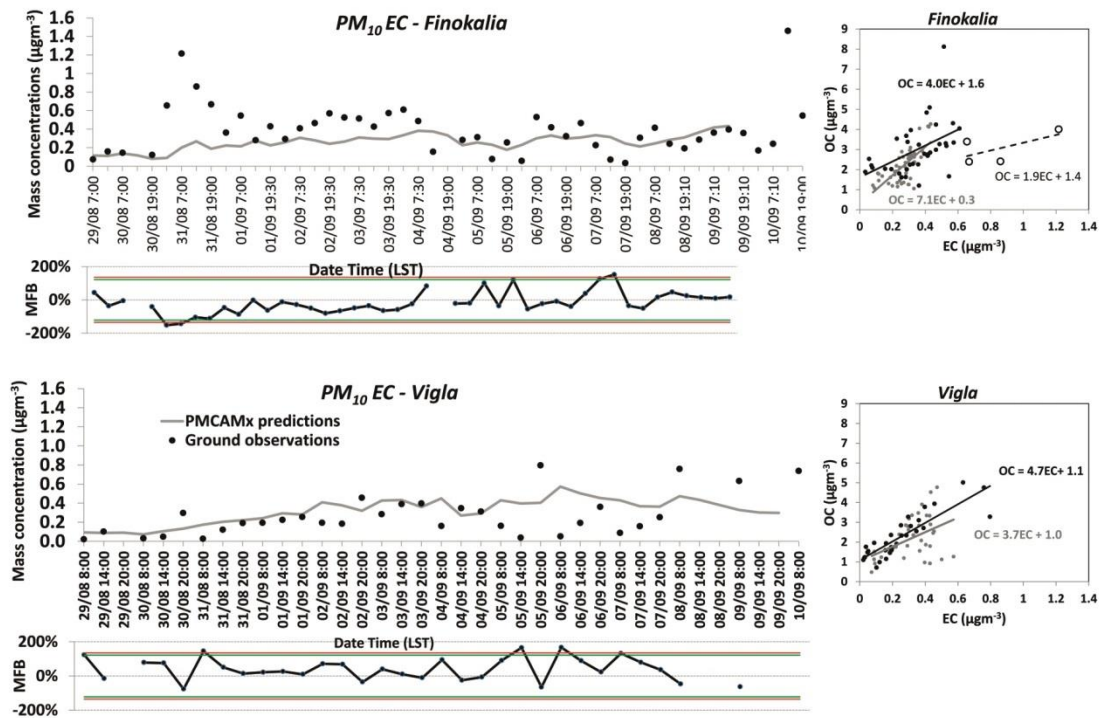


Figure 6. Comparison of PMCAMx (grey lines) with 6-hour measurements (black dots) of PM₁₀ elemental carbon concentrations (μg m⁻³) over Vigla (top) and Finokalia (bottom) during 31 August – 09 September 2011. The ability of the model to reproduce observations is estimated through the calculation of the Mean Fractional Biases (MFB), shown in the bottom of each graph. Model performance is average (good), when MFB values are within the red (green) lines (Boylan and Russell, 2006). OC versus EC (grey/PMCAMx and black/measurements data points and lines) in PM₁₀ is shown on the right of each graph. The black dashed line in Finokalia reflects the slope of OC to EC for the measurements during the NW transport from continental Greek sources (black empty circles, 31 August 2011).

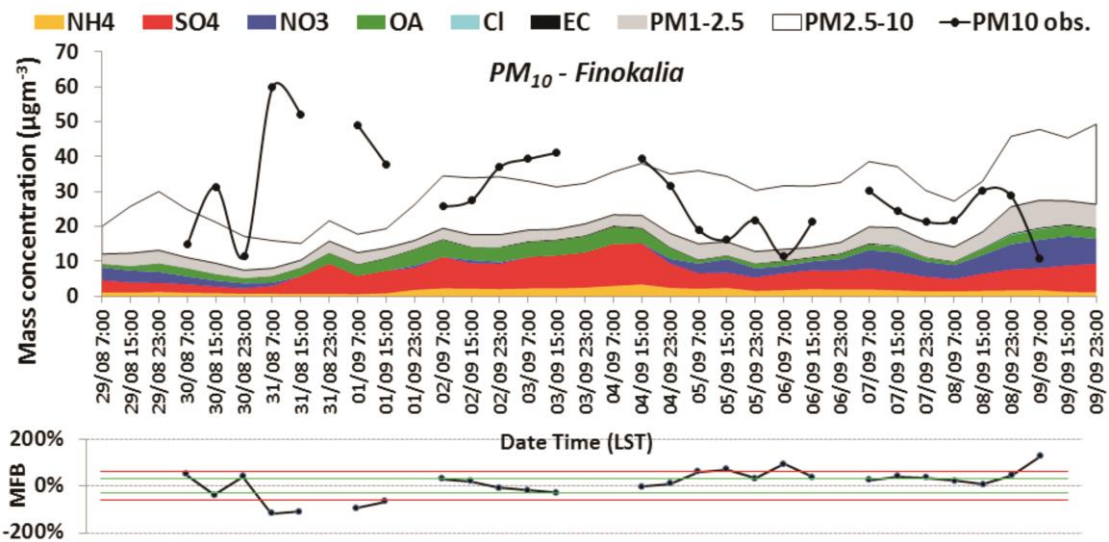


Figure 7. Comparison of PMCAMx (total shaded area) with 8-hour measurements (black dotted line) of PM₁₀ concentrations ($\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$) over Finokalia during 31 August – 09 September 2011. Color shaded areas represent the chemical composition of PM₁ predictions, the grey shaded area shows the PM_{1-2.5}, while the remaining (white shaded area) represents the coarse fraction (PM_{2.5-10}). The ability of the model to reproduce observations is estimated through the calculation of the Mean Fractional Biases (MFB), shown in the bottom. Model performance is average (good), when MFB values are within the red (green) lines (Boylan and Russell, 2006).