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The 26th Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD)

Corinth, Greece, 23 June 2025

**Agenda Item 3: Report by the Coordinator on Sustainable Development Activities for the period
May 2024- May 2025**

Flagship initiatives factsheets

For environmental and economic reasons, this document is printed in a limited number. Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copies to meetings and not to request additional copies.

UNEP/MAP
Athens, 2025

Note by the Secretariat

The 25th MCSD Steering Committee meeting of 18-19 April 2024 (Athens, Greece), highlighted the usefulness of the MSSD flagship initiatives information factsheets in order to enhance the visibility and outreach of the initiatives as implementing tools of the MSSD, and asked the lead Partners of the initiatives to update the existing ones, with the support of the Secretariat.

The updated information factsheets provide useful information also in the framework of the final evaluation of the MSSD, as well as within the MSSD update process and related embedding of proposed new flagship initiatives.

The following existing information factsheets of the MSSD flagship initiatives have been updated:

- i. Encourage the adoption and implementation of the Aarhus Convention on Public Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters
- ii. Promote the “Green list” (IUCN World Parks Congress) in riparian states to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of parks managing bodies created
- iii. Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award
- iv. Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change
- v. Support the Trust Fund for Mediterranean marine protected areas
- vi. Sustainable urban toolbox for the Mediterranean
- vii. Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development
- viii. Undertake regional assessments, as well as knowledge exchanges, of high- and low-tech solutions, that have been successfully implemented to achieve waste reduction
- ix. Mediterranean Business Award for Environmental Innovation

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I. Encourage the adoption and implementation of the Aarhus Convention on Public Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters
(Encourage the adoption and implementation of the Aarhus Convention)

The 28th Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (2-4 July 2024) welcomed initiatives taken by the secretariat, Parties and stakeholders (referring to efforts made under this MSSD Flagship initiative) to promote the Convention beyond the ECE region and in other relevant processes. It called upon the secretariat and other relevant organizations to continue cooperation and further promote synergy in the area of environmental rights. It also specifically called on Parties to support efforts of the countries of the Mediterranean region to accede to the Aarhus Convention.

Background

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters was adopted on the 25th of June 1998 in the Danish city of Aarhus at the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the 'Environment for Europe' process.

Together with its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers, it protects every person's right to live in an environment adequate to his/her health and well-being.

In particular, the objectives of the Aarhus Convention are: to link environmental rights and human rights; to acknowledge that we owe an obligation to future generations; to establish that sustainable development can be achieved only through the involvement of all stakeholders; to link government accountability and environmental protection; to focus on interactions between the public and public authorities in a democratic context.

The Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development supports the accession to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) with a dedicated flagship initiative.

The Aarhus Convention is widely accepted to be the leading example of implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration. Apart from engaging the public, accession to the Convention, could facilitate the design and implementation of National Strategies for Sustainable Development, green economy strategies and, most importantly, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

The Flagship in numbers

Key figures

- It is now 26 years since the adoption of the Aarhus Convention
- A little over half of the Mediterranean region (54%) is part of the Aarhus Convention.
- More specifically, 12 of the 22 Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention are already Parties to the Aarhus Convention.
- UNECE Member States Israel, Monaco and Turkey do not require for their accession an approval by the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention.
- The accession of the 7 non-UNECE Member States (Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, and Tunisia) requires an approval by the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention.

MSSD Objective 6

Improving governance in support of sustainable development

MSSD Dashboard indicators

27 – Number of countries that have clear mechanisms in place for ensuring public participation and guaranteeing public access to environmental information

Contributing to SDG 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions

Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at national level. It ultimately enhances public confidence in governmental decisions and reduces the instances of lengthy legal procedures and appeals and costly remedial measures by the State.	
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	Objectives The overall objective of this flagship initiative is to encourage the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention which are not yet part of it, to join the Aarhus Convention. To achieve this, it aims for the relevant Mediterranean countries to: - be familiarized with the benefits of being a member of the Aarhus Convention (also through exchanges with countries that are Parties to the Convention). - be capacitated on how to prepare for accession and what exactly it means for them to implement the Aarhus Convention pillars and promote the engagement of relevant NGOs and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in advancing environmental governance. - be supported for the overview of compatibility of their laws and institutional arrangements with the Aarhus Convention's requirements. The ambitious target was to have two-thirds of Mediterranean countries members of the Aarhus Convention by 2025.
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Leadership and partnership

In close cooperation with the UNECE Aarhus Convention secretariat, UNEP/MAP, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), and the Parliamentary Assembly of the UfM (Committee on Energy, Environment and Water), **flagship activities were launched in 2020 by the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE), the Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians for Sustainable Development (COMPSUD) and the MEPIELAN Centre**, through the EU LIFE Programme, and further strengthened since 2021 through the EU-funded Water and Environment Support (WES) in the ENI Neighbourhood South Region project

Main achievements

- Elaboration of a desk study on the basis of which a Foundation Discussion Document (FDD) for the “Mediterranean Accession Agenda” to the Aarhus Convention was produced (including a Summary for Decision Makers).
- A first capacity building activity on “Overall Environmental Governance and Aarhus Convention Promotion in the Mediterranean” took place online in March 2023, co-organized by the WES project and the UNECE Aarhus Convention secretariat and active contribution of the other flagship partners.
- A first regional training dedicated to the promotion of the Aarhus Convention in the whole of the Mediterranean took place in Athens, Greece, in November 2023, co-organized by the WES project and the UNECE Aarhus Convention secretariat. It aimed to strengthen the implementation capacity of public authorities, country experts and NGOs on the main pillars of the Aarhus Convention: Access

to Information, Public participation in decision-making, Access to Justice, as well as on the application of the principles of the Aarhus Convention in international decision-making.

- The “Mediterranean Accession Agenda to the Aarhus Convention (MAAAC)” was elaborated in English and French in 2023.
- At its session of 15 February 2024, the Committee on Energy, Environment and Water of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean included in the Committee’s recommendations a point calling on all the countries in the Mediterranean region to ratify the Aarhus Convention.
- The 28th Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (2-4 July 2024) acknowledged the efforts of the flagship initiative and called for all Parties to support efforts of the countries of the Mediterranean region to accede to the Aarhus Convention.

Challenges and the way forward

It is expected that for a wide accession of Mediterranean countries to the Aarhus Convention several years will be needed, and the current programming of the Flagship and the MAAAC needs to be updated and expanded beyond 2025.

However, there is a genuine willingness of many countries to advance in this direction and the momentum needs to be maintained. There is an enhanced understanding that being a Contracting Party to the Aarhus Convention significantly contributes to a country’s efforts to promote citizen-centred and environmentally sound policies, as well as facilitate and speed up the implementation of strategies and measures related to sustainable development. It provides greater political visibility at international level, building the image of the acceding country as a strong supporter of environmental democracy and it sends a strong positive signal to other countries, including trade and aid partners, as well as foreign investors and international institutions of the Government’s commitment to effective governance and democracy. It is evident that the familiarization and eventual accession to the Aarhus Convention requires first and foremost the political will of the governments of the targeted countries to fulfil in a solid way the already undertaken, by most governments, commitments concerning public participation vis-à-vis the various conventions and international fora.

In terms of concrete follow-up actions to support the fulfilment of the Flagship’s initiatives, a MEPIELAN Aarhus Centre (MAC), a specialized competence entity aiming to promote the Aarhus Convention in the Mediterranean and Balkan regions, is under establishment, while a UNEP/MAP - MEPIELAN online Training School entitled "Sustainable Maritime Governance in the Mediterranean - Environmental Governance and Sustainability" is planned for 5-10 May 2025.

Under the follow-up 3-year project of WES, the EU-funded “Water and Environment Support - Biodiversity and Climate Action in the Neighbourhood South Region (WES-BCA)”, there is provisional planning for in-country support via e.g. the organization of national round tables together with the UNECE Aarhus Convention secretariat. In parallel, MIO-ECSDE and COMPSUD will mobilise civil society participation in the process, including national parliaments.

Key references

- [Quick Guide to the Aarhus Convention](#) | [Implementation Guide](#)
- [Almaty Guidelines on Promoting the Application of the Principles of the Aarhus Convention in International Forums](#) | [Snapshot on the Almaty Guidelines](#) | [Checklist of Measures](#)
- [Mediterranean Accession Agenda to the Aarhus Convention \(MAAAC\)](#)

- [Le Calendrier d'adhésion Méditerranéen à La Convention d'Aarhus \(MAAAC\)](#)
- [Foundation Discussion Document \(FDD\) for the “Mediterranean Accession Agenda” to the Aarhus Convention](#)

Websites

- https://www.wes-med.eu/activities_type/he-4-reg-overall-environmental-governance-promotion-of-the-aarhus-convention-in-the-whole-of-the-mediterranean/
- <https://mio-ecsde.org/the-mediterranean-accession-agenda-to-the-aarhus-convention-a-guide-to-achieving-effective-environmental-governance-in-the-mediterranean/>
- <https://mio-ecsde.org/first-ever-regional-training-dedicated-to-the-promotion-of-the-aarhus-convention-in-the-whole-of-the-mediterranean-delivered-by-wes-and-the-unece-aarhus-convention-secretariat/>

II. Promote the “Green list” (IUCN World Parks Congress) in riparian states to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of parks managing bodies created (The IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas)

Only the 8,33% of the Mediterranean Sea is designated has Marine Protected Area, of them, only 18% of marine protected areas in the region have a management plan and only 10% are fully implementing it, it means the 0,83% of the total surface. The Green List programme aims to support the achievement of the 30% of the Mediterranean surface effectively protected and managed.¹

Background The IUCN Green List is a global programme of certification aiming to achieve and promote effective, equitable, and successful protected and conserved areas by highlighting best practices, and providing a benchmark for progress towards effective and equitable management. Its overarching objective is to increase the number of protected and conserved areas that are effectively and equitably managed and deliver conservation outcomes, contributing to SDG 15 “Life on land” and towards meeting Aichi Target 11 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The Green List is an important instrument for Protected Areas: – it requires the demonstration of measurable conservation outcomes that should be appropriate to the site level and its natural value; – it represents an approach through which an area can define an appropriate, shared and adaptive management plan that engages with stakeholders; – it includes periodical monitoring of obligations and can therefore help determine whether conservation outcomes are being achieved; – it allows collaborations in different contexts, both on site and at biogeographic level, as it is a shared and transparent methodology	The Flagship in numbers Key figures¹ - The Mediterranean coastline extends 46,000 km and the surface is 2,5 million km².^{1,2} - The 28% of Mediterranean marine species are endemic, meaning they are exclusively found there.² - There are 1,087 officially designated MPAs in the Mediterranean Sea.¹ - 8,33% of the Mediterranean Sea is designated has MPA, of those only 18% has a management plan, the 10% of the MPAs are fully implemented.¹ - Green List, with 33 sites listed in 5 countries and nine out of 22 contracting partnerships of the Barcelona convention. MSSD Objective 2 Promoting resource management, food production and food security through sustainable forms of rural development MSSD Dashboard indicator 9a – Number of protected areas participating in the Green List initiative Contributing to SDG 15 – Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
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Sources :

- 1 The status of marine protected areas in the Mediterranean Sea (MedPAN) [the-status-of-marine-en10_compressed.pdf \(medpan.org\)](#)
- 2 Towards 2020: how Mediterranean countries are performing to protect their sea (WWF): [Safeguarding the Mediterranean Sea | WWF \(panda.org\)](#)

Objectives

- Reaching the 30% of the Mediterranean Sea surface being effectively protected and managed through the Green List Standard.
- Improving the conservation outcomes of the Marine Protected Areas across the Mediterranean.
- Implementation of the Green List in all the countries in the Mediterranean basin.
- Development of Green List assessment of networks of protected areas to support supranational cooperation through ecological integrity.
- Encourage supranational cooperation in Marine Protected Areas and facilitation of knowledge exchange.



Fig 1: Expert Assessment Groups for the Green List (EAGLs) in the Mediterranean basin. (Source: IUCN)

Leadership and partnership

The initiative is **managed** by IUCN, who implements the Green List programme with a number of partners around the world, including the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre and WWF.

The following **countries** support the initiative: The Green List is supported and endorsed by the authorities of Albania, Algeria, Egypt, France, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Spain.

The **institutions/organizations/programmes** support the initiative: Institution Members: Germany's Federal Ministry for the Environment, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea, Nature Conservation, BIOPAMA, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) under the International Climate Initiative (IKI), Huawei, Chinese Academy of Forestry and the European Interreg and Life Programmes.

The programme is implemented in collaboration with several technical institutions that are committed to coordinate the process at the respective national level, among which Federparchi and the IUCN French Committee in Europe and the IUCN World Commission of Protected Areas at the Global scale.

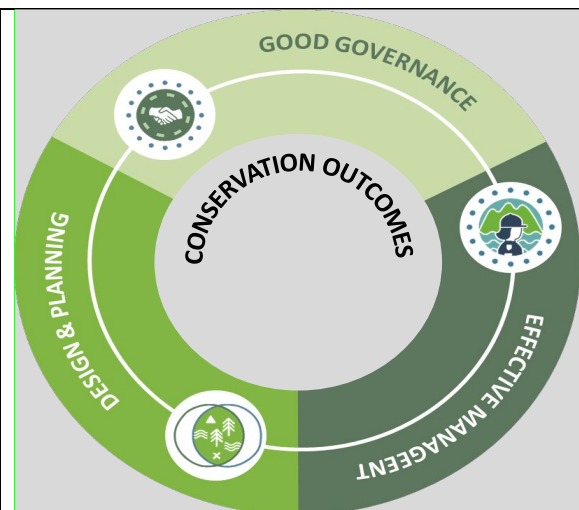


Fig 2: The four pillars of the Green List. (Source: IUCN)

Main achievements

- The IUCN Green List programme in the Euro Mediterranean area is making significant progress in promoting sustainability and conservation efforts in the region. In Italy, three sites have been listed in the Green List and a new national Green List Expert Assessment Group has been formed with the support of IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation and the Italian Ministry of Environment. In Spain, one site has been listed and another one is being assessed. France has been implementing the Green List since 2013 and currently has 26 listed sites and 8 ongoing applications. Albania has officially committed to implement the Green List in the country.
- In the North African region, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria have created a regional Expert Assessment Group that is fully operational and in the process of assessing candidacies.
- In the West Asia region there is a trained and fully operational regional Expert Assessment Group. In Egypt two sites have been listed, in Lebanon one site has been listed site and in Palestine one site is being assessed.
- A Memorandum of Understanding and Implementing Agreement has been signed between IUCN and WWF North Africa to facilitate the implementation of the Green List standard in the North Africa region.
- A regional Mediterranean Marine Green List Expert Assessment Group has been developed and will be operational in early 2025 to support the assessment of Marine sites in the Mediterranean.

Challenges and the way forward

- An Interreg Euro-MED project on Green List for MPAs has started in January 2024 with the goal of creating guidelines to apply the Global Green List Standard to the particularities of the Mediterranean Marine protected and conserved areas, which may allow to enlarge operations in the region. Moreover, the Act30 project has been approved to support the implementation of the 30x30 commitments in Morocco in 2024 and 2025.
- Launched at COP28 in Dubai by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB) and technology company Esri, Act30 brings together a wide network of scientific experts and Indigenous peoples' representatives to help governments chart an effective and fair route to conserving their countries' biodiverse areas. The initiative is designed to support the 190 governments that have committed to the 30x30 target of conserving 30% of terrestrial, inland water, coastal and marine areas by 2030, under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, agreed in December 2022.
- An important global initiative for Green List has been financed worldwide and is funding a new Green List Coordinator full-time position at the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation to support the Green List Mediterranean programme and coordinate the Green List programme in the European region.
- These latest developments will further allow expanding the impact and actions of this flagship initiative, aligned with the 2022 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Key references

- IUCN and World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) (2017). IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas: Standard, Version 1.1. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN
- IUCN, World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) and Assurance Services International (ASI) (2019). IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas: User Manual, Version 1.2. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN

- MedPAN and UNEP/MAP-SPA/RAC, 2023. The 2020 Status of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean. By Neveu R., Ganot D., Ducarme F., El Asmi S, Kheriji A. and Gallon S. Ed UNEP/MAP-SPA/RAC & MedPAN. Tunis 147 pages+Annexes
- Gomei M., Abdulla A., Schröder C., Yadav S., Sánchez A., Rodríguez D., Abdul Malak D. (2021) [original 2019]. Towards 2020: how Mediterranean countries are performing to protect their sea. Rev. ed., 36 pages

Websites

- [IUCN Green List Home - IUCN Green List](#)
- [Act30 | Rooted in tradition | Guided by experts | Conserve 30% by 2030](#)
- [Homepage - Interreg Euro-MED - GreenList4MMPAs \(interreg-euro-med.eu\)](#)
- [the-status-of-marine-en10 compressed.pdf \(medpan.org\)](#)
- [Safeguarding the Mediterranean Sea | WWF \(panda.org\)](#)

III. Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award (IEFCA)

Upscale the role of Mediterranean coastal municipalities in planning and managing Mediterranean cities as pillars of a shared vision for a sustainable development of the urban coastal areas in the region and key actors for implementation, while promoting exchange of best practices at regional level.

Background

Population densities in Mediterranean coastal areas have continued to increase at unsustainable rates over the last decade. Over 1965- 2015, urban pressures increased in 75% of Mediterranean countries and this trend is expected to continue, prefiguring a worsening of current problems: excessive land consumption; biodiversity loss; more rapid degradation of architectural heritage; aquifer exhaustion and pollution; inefficient non separative waste management and the cumulative effect of all these factors on the environment and human health.

Mediterranean cities are insufficiently resilient in terms of coping with natural and human-made risks and hazards, while their potential as drivers of innovative and sustainable social and economic change is insufficiently recognized.

The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, at their 19th Meeting held in Athens, Greece, in 2016, established the Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award.

The Award, conferred through an open call to applicants, assesses and recognizes the achievements of Mediterranean coastal cities that demonstrate efforts and improvements in the urban environment and the quality of life, while promoting sustainable development.

The Istanbul Award is financially sponsored by Türkiye, with a voluntary contribution. The Awards ceremonies are organized, since 2017, in the framework of the COP meetings. The 5th edition will be celebrated at COP24, in December 2025.

The Flagship in numbers

Key figures

- Two in every three people living in urban are
- By around 2050 around 170 million inhabitants in the countries on the European shore (140 million in 2005), over 300 million to the South and East (151 million in 2005)
- By around 2030, around 42 million additional dwellings needed mainly in the cities
- In the Middle East and North Africa region, waste production, currently standing at 63 million tonnes per annum, expected to reach almost 135 million by 2025
- By 2050, under a business-as-usual water-use scenario, water withdrawals are projected to double or even triple in catchment areas in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean
- According to past trends the overall energy demand in the region will increase by around 40% by 2040.

MSSD Objective 3

Planning and managing sustainable Mediterranean cities

MSSD Dashboard indicators

18 – Proportion of urban population living in slums, informal settlements, or inadequate housing (SDG Indicator 11.1.1)

19 - Status of UNESCO world heritage sites

20 - Waste generated and treated by type of waste and treatment type

21 - Green House Gas emissions

Contributing to SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and communities

Objectives

The Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award aims to provide recognition to the efforts of local authorities to improve the environment and the quality of life and promote sustainable development in Mediterranean coastal towns and cities.

It also aims to encourage Mediterranean coastal towns and cities to move towards a more environment-friendly future and to enable them to serve as model-cities and inspire sustainable urban development in the region.

Local authorities are invited to apply to the competition by demonstrating concrete steps taken and progress achieved to protect the environment, improve the quality of life, and promote sustainable development.

Leadership and partnership

The initiative is **directly managed** by UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention Secretariat and MedCities. The following **countries** support the initiative: Türkiye

Main achievements

Since 2017, the Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award (IEFCA) has successfully **awarded 4 Mediterranean cities during the COP meetings**, through a competition that allowed the local authorities to present their candidacy and to emphasize partnerships with civil society, the scientific community and the private sector, including actions aimed at promoting urban sustainability.

Izmir (Türkiye), Ashdod (Israel), Málaga (Spain) and Genoa (Italy) have been awarded so far, demonstrating good achievements on urban sustainability, within key components such as climate change, ecosystem protection, wise/efficient/sustainable-use of resources, resilient infrastructure, local transport, pollution and waste, water, energy efficiency, green buildings, etc.

In the course of its implementation since 2017, the IEFCA has contributed to **raise multi-level awareness** on the importance and the issues linked to sustainable urban areas, and to **identify best practices** to encourage efforts in addressing the pressures to the marine and coastal environment associated with urban development.

Challenges and the way forward

Climate change adaptation and mitigation is heavily dependent on urban action and Mediterranean cities have a key role to play as ‘local sentinels’ and key implementers to support decarbonization efforts therefore contributing to the development and implementation of climate change measures.

Accordingly, the way forward should plan to upscale the Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award by:

- Supporting municipalities integrating climate change mitigation and adaptation measures into local policies, strategies and planning, and in line with national plans therefore reinforcing multi-level governance
- Promoting public/private investments to support zero net decarbonization paths
- Streamlining IEFCA implementation by ensuring the exchange of awarded best practices and knowledge at local and regional level
- Supporting cities in accelerating their digital transformation as key asset towards decarbonization
- Supporting capacity building and trainings of local authorities
- Promoting Citizen and stakeholders’ engagement
- Creating synergies with the EU Mission Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities in order to develop a Mediterranean cities zero net network

Key references

COP 19 Decision IG.22/19 on the Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award

https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/6083/16ig22_28_22_19_eng.pdf

Websites

[Istanbul Environment Friendly City Award | UNEP/MAP](#)

IV. Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change (MedECC)

Please provide a key message or a relevant quotation.

MedECC has established scientific cooperation involving scientists from all Mediterranean countries to make knowledge on climate and environmental change available and understandable, and to promote evidence-based decision-making that guides us toward a sustainable future.

Background

The network of Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change (MedECC) is an open and independent international scientific expert network providing support to decision-makers and the public on the basis of available scientific information.

The network includes scientists from 35 countries, including 19 Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, from the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities perspective, providing their expertise on a voluntary basis.

MedECC's objective is to bridge the gap between scientists and policymakers and contribute to the improvement of policies at all levels by supporting decision-making with accurate and accessible information on current and future impacts of climate and environmental change in the Mediterranean.

MedECC is a successful example of a science-policy and science-society interface.

Established in May 2018, the Secretariat of MedECC is hosted by Plan Bleu, a regional Activity Centre of UNEP/MAP, based in Marseille, France.

MedECC is governed by three Coordinators and a Steering Committee.

Representatives of the UNEP/MAP Secretariat, Plan Bleu and the UfM Secretariat are members of the Advisory Board.

The Flagship in numbers

Key figures

- The rise in the Mediterranean means sea level could go up by a meter by the end of the 21st century, potentially leading to the permanent displacement of up to 20. million people in the Mediterranean region.
- By 2040, the leakage of plastics into the sea is likely to double if annual plastic production continues to grow at a rate of 4% and waste management is not radically improved.
- Under a 2°C warming scenario, droughts could become 150% to 200% more likely in the South of the Mediterranean
- Mediterranean countries are still highly dependent on fossil fuels to produce electricity, with renewables only accounting for 11% of total consumption in 2020.

MSSD Objective 4

Addressing climate change as a priority

MSSD Dashboard indicators

21 - Green House Gas emissions per capita (related to GDP)

22a - Energy intensity measured in terms of primary energy and GDP (SDG Indicator 7.3.1)

22b - Renewable energy share in the total energy consumption (SGD Indicator 7.2.1)

Contributing to SDG 13 – Climate Action

Objectives of MedECC

- To gather the scientific community working on climate and environmental changes in the whole Mediterranean Basin. This includes building a bridge between existing research structures and programs and facilitating data-sharing through existing or new fora and platforms.
- To assess the best scientific knowledge about climate and environmental changes in the Mediterranean Basin and render it accessible to policy-makers, key stakeholders and citizens.

- To contribute to future IPCC, IPBES or related assessments in the Mediterranean Basin.
- To build a regional science-policy interface on climate and environmental change by bridging the gap between research and decision-making, contributing to the improvement of policies at national, regional, and local level by providing consolidated scientific assessments on particular issues related to climate and environmental changes and by responding to requests by decision-makers.
- To identify possible gaps in the current research on climate change and its impacts in the Mediterranean.
- To help build the capacity of scientists from Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries (SEMCs) at the international level and standards, encouraging training, research and development efforts of these countries.

Leadership and partnership

The initiative is supported by: UNEP/MAP, Plan Bleu/RAC, UfM

The following **countries** support the initiative: France, Italy, Monaco

The following **institutions/organizations/programmes** support the initiative: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) (thanks to UfM), the French Agency for Ecological Transition (ADEME), the French Ministry of Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion, the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE), the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security (MASE), the Principality of Monaco, the French Rhone Mediterranean Corsica water agency, and the Mediterranean Trust Fund (MTF), Association pour l'Innovation et la Recherche au service du Climat (Air Climat, France), Service Informatique Pythéas (SIP), OSU Institut Pythéas (France)

Main achievements

- The 1st Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1) on Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean Basin – Current Situation and Risks for the Future was released on 17 November 2020 during the online conference Med2020. 190 authors participated in drafting the report. Among 86 Coordinating Lead Authors (CLAs) and Lead Authors (LAs) from 21 countries, 27 (31%) are based in southern and eastern Mediterranean countries.
- The Summary for Policymakers (SPM) of MAR1 was endorsed by the Contracting Parties during the 22nd Meeting of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP 22) (December, Antalya, Türkiye) with Decision IG.25/4, and recognised as “an important contribution of the scientific community to future climate and environmental actions in the Mediterranean region” in the declaration of the the 2nd UfM Ministerial Conference on Environment and Climate Action (4 October 2021, Cairo, Egypt)
- MedECC contributed to the State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean (SoED) by co-coordinating the chapter on climate change.
- MedECC also supports the MED2050 foresight study and its report (publication in 2024)
- MedECC has been awarded the 2020 North-South Prize of the Council of Europe
- The Summary for Policymakers (SPM) of the Special Report on climate and environmental coastal risks was approved during the 23rd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP 23) (December 5 to 8, Portoroz, Slovenia) with Decision IG.26/13. The Portoroz Ministerial Declaration emphasizes support for MedECC to ensure evidence-based environmental policies in the Mediterranean.

Challenges and the way forward

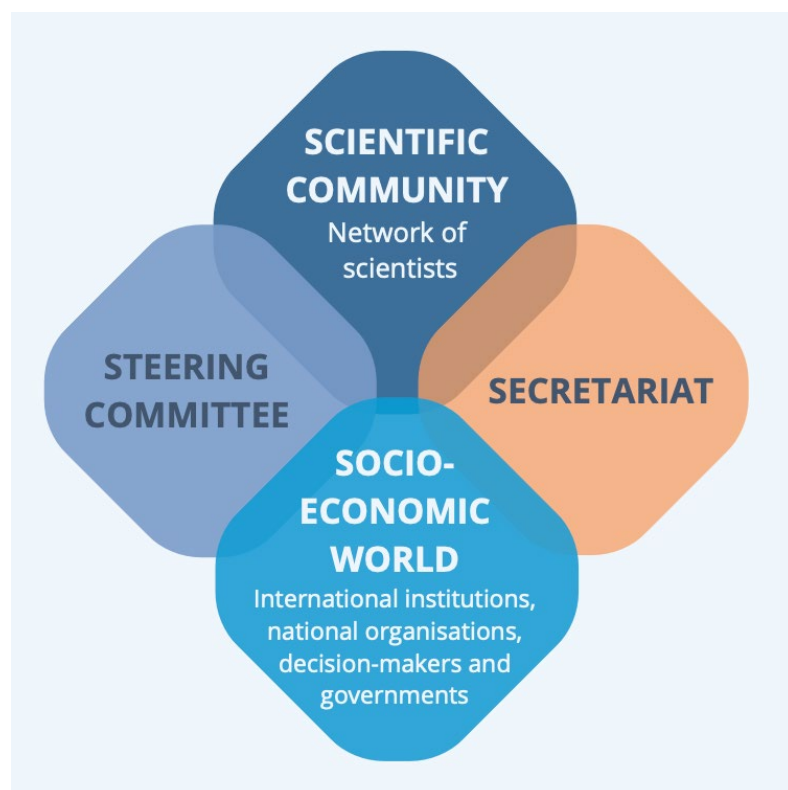
MedECC proposes to prepare a Second Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR2) with a tentative publication scheduled for 2028. This report would account for the substantial progress in research and monitoring since MAR1 and thus update the assessment of scientific knowledge on the challenges related to climate and environmental change in the Mediterranean. Such an update would be in line with procedures of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which also publishes its assessment reports every 7 years. Mediterranean governments and decision-makers have shown great interest in MAR1, making MedECC a key reference in the science-policy interface in the Mediterranean.

Key references

- MedECC (2020) Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean Basin – Current Situation and Risks for the Future. First Mediterranean Assessment Report [Cramer, W., Guiot, J., Marini, K. (eds.)] Union for the Mediterranean, Plan Bleu, UNEP/MAP, Marseille, France, 632pp. ISBN: 978-2-9577416-0-1 / DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7224821
- MedECC (2020) Summary for Policymakers. In: Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean Basin – Current Situation and Risks for the Future. First Mediterranean Assessment Report [Cramer W, Guiot J, Marini K (eds.)] Union for the Mediterranean, Plan Bleu, UNEP/ MAP, Marseille, France, pp 11-40, doi:10.5281/zenodo.5513887.

Websites

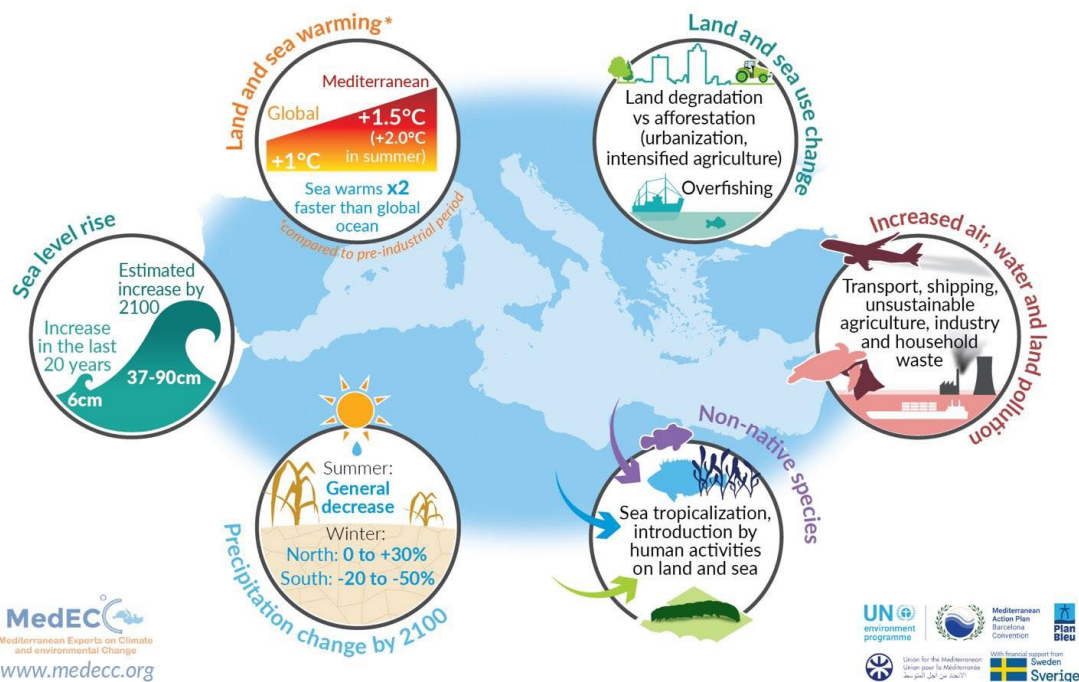
www.medecc.org



Structure and functioning of MedECC

1st Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1) published by MedECC

The Mediterranean Basin: main drivers of environmental change



V. Support the Trust Fund for Mediterranean marine protected areas (MedFund)

Please provide a **key message or a relevant quotation**.

MPAs represent 8% of the Mediterranean, of which 0.04% is under strong protection. Moreover, due to the lack of real management means deployed in the long term, many Mediterranean MPAs are only “paper” MPAs and do not give the expected results.

The extension of Flagship Initiative on The MedFund is essential to meet the global targets set by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) under Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and the Post-2020 Strategy.

Background

Established in 2015 by France, Tunisia and Monaco with the support of the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, finances the organizations in charge of the management of marine protected areas (local NGOs, national agencies) and supports the implementation of concrete activities that are essential to the management of these natural spaces

The extension of Flagship Initiative on The MedFund is essential to meet the global targets set by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) under Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and the Post-2020 Strategy. Target 3 aims to protect 30% of the world’s oceans by 2030, a key objective in halting biodiversity loss and addressing the degradation of marine ecosystems. The Mediterranean, home to critical biodiversity, requires enhanced funding for the establishment, management, and expansion of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to achieve this goal.

Extending The MedFund flagship Initiative will ensure long-term financial sustainability, strengthen regional cooperation, and enable effective management of MPAs across the Mediterranean. It will also contribute to the broader Post-2020 Strategy by fostering regional alignment with global commitments, supporting climate resilience, and promoting biodiversity conservation. With increased funding, The MedFund will provide the necessary resources to meet international commitments and advance the protection of marine biodiversity in the Mediterranean, thereby supporting global conservation efforts.

The Flagship in numbers

Key figures

- Mediterranean countries are committed to :” By 2030, at least 30 per cent of the Mediterranean Sea is protected and conserved through well connected, ecologically representative and effective systems of marine and coastal protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, ensuring adequate geographical balance, with the focus on areas particularly important for biodiversity. “ and “By 2030, the number and coverage of marine and coastal protected areas with enhanced protection levels is increased, contributing to the recovery of marine ecosystems.
- The 2020 Status of marine protected areas in the Mediterranean prepared by SPA/RAC and MedPAN shows that only 8.33 % of the Mediterranean Sea is under official designation of a protected statute and the cumulative surface of the no-go, no-take or no-fishing area represents only 0.04 % of the Mediterranean.

MSSD Objective 1

Ensuring sustainable development in marine and coastal areas

MSSD Dashboard indicators

7 – Coverage of protected areas in relation to marine territorial waters

Contributing to SDG 14 – Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Objectives

Support 20 MPAs and protect 7,000 km² of natural marine and coastal areas by 2025 and 80% of the southern and eastern Mediterranean MPAs

Sustainably finance and mobilize all the actions essential to the management of Mediterranean MPAs over the long term.

Leadership and partnership

The MedFund is an environmental trust fund based in Monaco, specifically dedicated to the financing of marine protected areas in the Mediterranean. The Fund is administered by an alliance of Mediterranean states and regional organizations

The following **countries** support the initiative: Monaco France, Tunisia as founding member and Albania Morocco, Spain, as active member countries

The **institutions/organizations/programmes** support the initiative: Institution Members: Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation; Oceanographic Institute – Prince Albert 1st of Monaco Foundation ; UNEP/MAP Specially Protected Area Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC); Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund; MedPAN; WWF Mediterranean; IUCN Centre for Mediterranean cooperation; French coastal protection agency Conservatoire du Littoral; Mediterranean Small Islands Initiative, MedPAN is the network of Mediterranean marine protected area managers.

The MedFund is financially supported by an alliance of public and private donors : the Global Environment Facility (GEF); the French Facility for Global Environment (FFEM); the French Development Agency (AFD); the Government of Monaco; the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation; and a network of aquariums led by the Oceanographic Institute of Monaco

Its Board of Directors consists of States, international organizations and NGOs. Its governance is supported by advisory bodies: the investment committee and the grant award committee, as well as *ad hoc* technical committees.

The executive management, based in Monaco, monitors and implements the Fund's actions, in accordance with the strategic action plan.

Main achievements

- To date, 2,7 million euros have been committed to support eight MPAs covering over 3,000 km² in four Mediterranean countries: Karaburun Sazan MPA in Albania; Kuriat, Kneiss, Zembra and La Galite MPAs in Tunisia; Al Hoceima and Jbel Moussa MPAs in Morocco; and Gokova Bay MPA in Turkey.
- The MedFund's support is granted for five years to promote "co-management" approaches, i.e. the joint involvement of a national authority in charge of the management, and an NGO present in the field to support the implementation of actions. This allows to contribute to the long-term financing of activities that are poorly funded but essential to the effective management of MPAs, in particular their recurring management costs.
- Performance and the efficiency of activities funded through a scientific assessment tool developed for Mediterranean MPAs were put in place to monitor and evaluate the MPA management based on 3 conservation targets selected for each MPA.

Challenges and the way forward.

- Post-2020 GBF targets go beyond simply increasing coverage of MCPAs and OECMs and require that protected area systems must also be effectively managed. There are a number of MCPAs in the Mediterranean that currently lack management plans, and many of those that have plans are not implementing them effectively, if at all. Management plans should be developed in participation with stakeholders and are a crucial tool in providing clear guidance to both MCPA managers and users alike. There is a clear need therefore to support the development of practical and cost-effective management plans for MCPAs in the region
- Contribute to the implementation of the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for marine and coastal protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures in the Mediterranean and its MCPA effectiveness strategic pillar by mobilizing sufficient and sustainable resources for the management of MCPAs in the Mediterranean

Key references

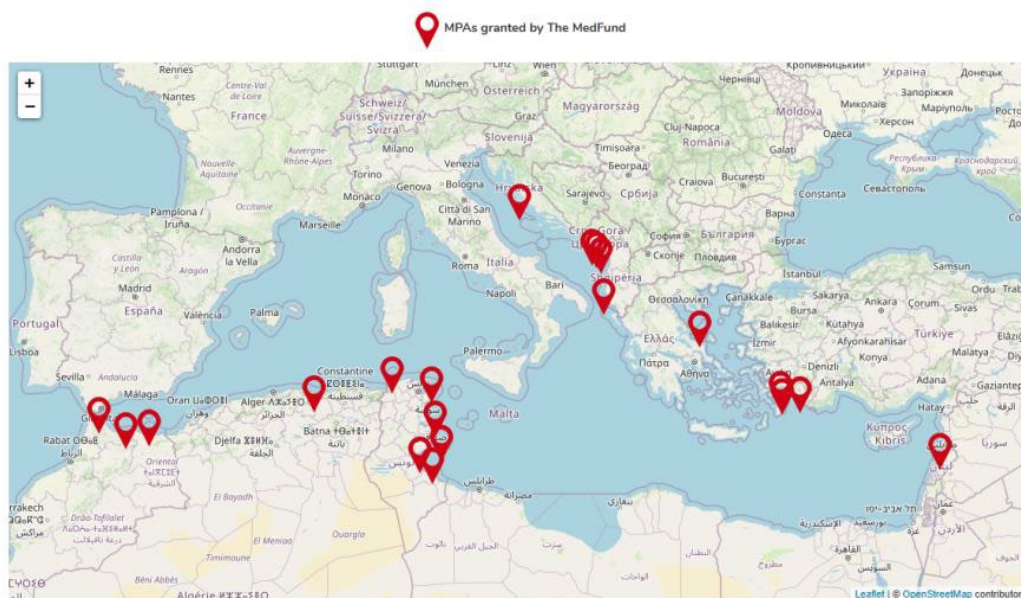
[15/4. Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#)

[Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework](#)

Websites

[TheMedFund - Fonds environnemental dédié aux AMP de Méditerranée](#)

The System of Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas in 2020, MedPAN and UNEP/MAP-SPA/RAC, November 2021.



Overview of our actions in the Mediterranean²

² <https://themedfund.org/>

VI. Sustainable urban toolbox for the Mediterranean (MedUrbanTools)

A knowledge-sharing platform specifically designed for municipalities across the Mediterranean to strengthen urban resilience and promote sustainable urban planning.

Background Population densities in Mediterranean coastal areas have continued to increase at unsustainable rates over the last decade. Over 1965- 2015, urban pressures increased in 75% of Mediterranean countries and this trend is expected to continue, prefiguring a worsening of current problems: excessive land consumption; more rapid degradation of architectural heritage; aquifer pollution; inefficient waste management and the cumulative effect of all these factors on the environment and human health. The Mediterranean region is moreover warming 20% faster than the global average, with temperatures expected to rise by 2.2°C by 2040. This will lead to more frequent, intense, and prolonged heat waves, impacting vulnerable urban populations, and intensifying torrential rain episodes. Urban areas are 5 to 9 °C warmer than rural areas due to the "urban heat island effect," caused by heat-absorbing surfaces and a lack of cooling vegetation. This leads to higher energy consumption, increased air pollution, and elevated health risks. Mediterranean cities are insufficiently resilient in terms of coping with natural and human-made risks and hazards, while their potential as drivers of innovative and sustainable social and economic change is insufficiently recognized. The MedUrbanTools was first presented during the 17th Meeting of the MCSD which agreed to Create a sustainable urban toolbox for the Mediterranean, with a view to planning cities that will work for everyone, in order to make them inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, and as flagship initiative of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD).	The Flagship in numbers Key figures - Two in every three people living in urban areas - By around 2050 around 170 million inhabitants in the countries on the European shore (140 million in 2005), over 300 million to the South and East (151 million in 2005) - By around 2030, around 42 million additional dwellings needed mainly in the cities - In the Middle East and North Africa region, waste production, currently standing at 63 million tons per annum, expected to reach almost 135 million by 2025 - By 2050, under a business-as-usual water-use scenario, water withdrawals are projected to double or even triple in catchment areas in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean - According to past trends the overall energy demand in the region will increase by around 40% by 2040 MSSD Objective 3 Planning and managing sustainable Mediterranean cities MSSD Dashboard indicators 18 – Proportion of urban population living in slums, informal settlements, or inadequate housing (SDG Indicator 11.1.1) 19 - Status of UNESCO world heritage sites 20 - Waste generated and treated by type of waste and treatment type 21 - Green House Gas emissions Contributing to SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and communities
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Objectives

- Share and disseminate tools on urban and metropolitan management in the Mediterranean.
- Designed as an open platform to underpin knowledge-sharing, it features a user-friendly interface offering technical content and multimedia materials based on best available practices, thus promoting urban analyses while inspiring new initiatives, specifically on: Environment and Climate Change; Waste management, prevention and reduction; Energy Transition; Urban Strategies and Local Governance; Economic Development; Urban Planning; Sustainable Mobility; Innovation; Culture and Identity.
- Provide easy access a set of solutions through three types of categories: cases, voices and tools.
 - **Cases:** best practices developed in Mediterranean cities
 - **Voices:** video pills, interviews from experts from the region.
 - **Tools:** a recompilation of existing materials developed in previous projects, including guidelines (thematic documents and plans) and instruments (innovative responses to existing challenges.)
- Provide support on sustainable urban planning and management to Municipal technicians, experts in urban sustainable development, political leaders, local and national, Agents of decentralized cooperation, multilateral organisations, regional banks of development, public local and national cooperation agencies.

Leadership and partnership

The initiative is **directly managed** by MedCities

The **institutions/organizations/programmes** which have supported the initiative:

The first development of MedUrbanTools was set in collaboration and with engagement of the Urban Hub of the Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI). Members of CMI Urban Hub are :World Bank, Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations, the European Investment Bank, the Agence Française de Développement, the GIZ and Medcities.

MedUrbanTools counts moreover with the support of the 79 member municipalities.

Main financial partners to date: Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB), Interreg MED Urban Transports Community and REV-ACTE projects.

Main achievements

The platform holds more than 106 best practices, 57 videos of experts and 142 replicable tools on different topics concerning Mediterranean cities, including the experiences of 75 cities or metropolitan areas.

Challenges and the way forward

The most important challenge is to make the initiative grow: (a) in terms of content and (b) in terms of use. Ideally, growth would come from implementing a mixed strategy to provide it with continuous, state of the art, updated content, and at the same time, improve the user experience in the search for information, so that MedUrbanTools becomes a reference tool on sustainable urban development in the Mediterranean. The enhancements needed in both fields are already identified and therefore it would only require the mobilization of the required financial resources.

Websites

- www.medcities.org; www.medurbantools.com

VII. Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (MSESD)

“Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) at all levels and in all its forms, formal, non-formal and informal, is a most safe tool and effective investment for the development and the promotion of sustainable development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals”: Statement of the High-Level Event of Education and Environment Ministers on the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development and its Action Plan towards 2030 (Nicosia, 6/10/2022)

Background Endorsed in 2014 by the Ministers for Environment and Climate Change of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (MSESD) aims to ensure that national frameworks support ESD, promote sustainability through all levels and types of education, develop educators’ competencies, and promote resources, research and cooperation on ESD. The MSESD was included in the Athens Declaration of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention at COP19. (2016) An Action Plan adopted by the Nicosia ESD Ministerial Conference (2016) set the implementation of the Strategy into motion. The Mediterranean Committee on ESD was formed to support the Mediterranean countries and monitor implementation for the entire region. During 2022, a participatory revision of the Action Plan was conducted, resulting in the “MSESD Action Plan towards 2030”. The updated Action Plan was adopted on the 6th of October 2022 by the High-Level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministers of the Mediterranean, organized in the framework of the 9th “Environment for Europe” Conference (EfE9) of the UNECE in Nicosia (5-7 October 2022). The updated Action Plan reflects in an integrated manner the key provisions and updates of the international and regional frameworks that the MSESD is closely linked to (Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (2016-2025 of the Barcelona Convention; the UfM GreenerMedAgenda; the UNESCO ESDfor2030, the Recommendation on learning for environmental sustainability of the Council of the EU; and, the UNECE ESD Framework 2021-2030) and aspires to develop the necessary knowledge, attitudes and competences of the people of the region, to learn, live and work in a	The Flagship in numbers Key figures³ • Most Mediterranean countries have already or are in the process of elaborating National Strategies or Plans on ESD. • However, the majority of the teachers of the region report that lack of curriculum coverage of ESD, particularly on climate crisis, is the most profound system-level barrier, together with lack of relevant education resources to support their teaching work. • 70% of youth surveyed state that they cannot explain climate change, even in broad terms, or do not know anything about it. They asked for learner-centered reflective ways of learning, solutions-based and action-oriented methods and their educators to be well supported to be able to teach sustainable development and climate change related issues. MSSD Objective 6 Improving governance in support of sustainable development MSSD Dashboard indicators 28 – Education for Sustainable Development Contributing to SDG 4 – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
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³ UNESCO Report 2022

more just, creative, healthy and sustainable way for a green society and economy.	
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Objectives of the MSED

- Ensure that policy, legislation and other regulatory and operational frameworks support ESD
- Promote SD through formal, non-formal and informal learning
- Equip educators with the competence to include SD in their teaching
- Ensure that adequate tools and materials for ESD are accessible
- Promote research on and development of ESD
- Strengthen cooperation on ESD at all levels, including exchange of experience and technologies within the Mediterranean region

Leadership and partnership

The Scientific Secretariat of the initiative is supported by the UNESCO Chair on Management and Education for Sustainable Development (of the University of Athens) and the Technical Secretariat is provided by the Mediterranean Education Initiative on Environment and Sustainability (MEIES) of the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE).

The following **countries** participate in the **Bureau** of the initiative: Cyprus (chair), Greece, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine.

The following **international/regional organizations** participate in the **Bureau** of the initiative:

UNEP/MAP

UfM

UNESCO

UNECE

League of Arab States

Main achievements

- 5 national ESD policy frameworks have been prepared considering the MSED and its Action Plan.
- At least 12 national and regional physical and online training sessions (“training of trainers”) have taken place.
- 19 countries in the region have been technically supported in their efforts of promoting ESD in their national contexts.
- 1700 administrators and educators have been engaged in interactive trainings and dialogues.
- 1 Flagship Project of UNESCO/GAP was dedicated to the Action Plan of the MSED.
- 1 Sustainability Charter was prepared and adopted by the Greek Universities.

Challenges and the way forward

Despite the considerable efforts of the countries - including governments, educational institutions, and civil society organisations, and of the international/regional organisations in promoting and mainstreaming ESD, the following requirements need to be met, demanding concentrated and collective efforts for the transformation of the formal and non-formal learning systems towards the achievement of the MSED’s Action Plan toward 2030 objectives:

- Continuous support of competences development and training of trainers.
- Transforming learning institutions through Whole Institute Approaches (WIA) and reforming curricula towards the SDGs and the EU Green Deal, also via the engagement of non-state actors.
- Targeted efforts on youth enhancement, participation and engagement in ESD practice and policy.
- Integrated approaches in developing digital and green skills within ESD.
- Enhanced coordination and collaboration on ESD within and among institutions/ organisations/ ministries (at national and international level).

Key references

- [The Mediterranean Strategy on ESD](#)
- Action Plan towards 2030 of the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development ([ENG](#), [FR](#))
- Statement approved during the High-Level Event of Education and Environment Ministers on the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development and its Action Plan towards 2030 (6 October 2022) ([ENG](#), [FR](#))

Websites

- [MIO-ECSDE/MEdIES micro-site dedicated to MSED](#)
- <https://www.unep.org/unepmap/what-we-do/MSSD/MSED>

VIII. Undertake regional assessments, as well as knowledge exchanges, of high- and low-tech solutions, that have been successfully implemented to achieve waste reduction.

(Regional assessments and knowledge exchanges on waste reduction)

Despite the efforts and progress, overall, the Mediterranean economy is still marked by a linear system, which over-exploits natural resources, causes pollution and thus undermines fragile ecosystems. In a region considered a biodiversity hotspot, waste prevention and reduction through upstream solutions are urgently needed.

Background

While urbanization continues apace in particular along its southern shores, most Mediterranean cities, notably the coastal ones, are not being managed sustainably in relation to their carrying capacities and are insufficiently resilient. Yet as engines of economic development, innovation and creativity, cities are critical for sustainable development, as the climate friendly cities agenda shows. For those reasons, a new, sustainable, inclusive and creative approach to planning and managing Mediterranean cities is the best hope for riparian urban settlements. Key elements of this approach include sustainable waste management within the context of a more circular economy.

Solid and liquid waste production and management remain in fact a major concern in many urban regions in the Mediterranean. Current consumption and production patterns are characterized by high resource consumption combined with low recycling rates and unsatisfactory waste management. They are unsustainable overall and lead to considerable environmental degradation. Common disposal practices of waste in the region are burning and landfilling (usually in unmanaged dumpsites).

Effective management of solid waste, sustainable consumption and production, minimization of plastic waste and abatement of marine litter are all closely interlinked with the region's efforts to transition to a green, fair and circular economy.

The Flagship in numbers

Key figures⁴

- Evidence shows that although municipal solid waste generation remains high in the northern Mediterranean countries, a decoupling of waste generation and economic development and population growth is starting to emerge in some of them (EEA, 2022).
- In the south, a steadily increasing trend in waste generation per capita has been recorded, which is expected to continue in the future (+29% in 2030 and +50% in 2050; World Bank, 2018) as a result of population growth and the predominant linear economic paradigm followed.
- The share of recycling and composting represents less than 10% of the total collected amount, resulting in a loss of valuable resources for the region.

MSSD Objective 3

Planning and managing sustainable Mediterranean cities

MSSD Dashboard indicators

20 – Waste generated and treated by type of waste and treatment type

Contributing to SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities

Objectives

The Flagship aims at the promotion of national measures for implementing innovative waste management solutions, in line with the waste hierarchy: prevention, reduction, reuse, sorting, recycling, recovery, and, as the least preferred option, disposal. Priorities are also to develop behavioral change schemes that will lead to

⁴ Source Plan Bleu [Sustainable cities - Plan-bleu : Environnement et développement en Méditerranée \(planbleu.org\)](https://planbleu.org/)

reduction in waste volumes and to develop legal and financial frameworks to support sustainable waste management.

Leadership and partnership

- The initiative is **directly managed** by the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE).
- The **institutions/organizations/programmes** that support the initiative are:
- The Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians for Sustainable Development (COMPSUD)
- The Union for the Mediterranean
- UNEP/MAP
- The EU-funded project ‘Water and Environment support in the ENI Southern Mediterranean region’ (WES project - [Home - WES-MED.EU](#)) and the ENI CBC MED funded project, [Med4Waste](#) supported the activities of the flagship initiative up till 2024.

Main achievements

- An on-line Repository has been developed aiming to promote waste reduction and circular economy across the waste management chain in the Mediterranean region. The cases included were selected out of many from different countries of the region via a stakeholder consultation to identify best practices. They are of varying scale and type, from which a lot can be learned and that could inspire more actions to substantially reduce waste generation by 2030 through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse.
- Regional assessments of high- and low-tech solutions including but not limited to awareness-raising and economic measures were conducted by WES and Med4Waste, that have been successfully implemented in Mediterranean countries and elsewhere (e.g. in the EU) to achieve waste reduction and promote the principles of circular economy, relevant to the Mediterranean countries’ context and needs.
- Regional Trainings, Study Visits and Peer-to-Peers processes on Monitoring and Mitigating Single-Use Plastics (2024, 2021), the Decentralized Management of Organic Waste (2023), Innovative Circular Economy Business Models (2023), the Sustainable Management of Construction and Demolition Waste (2022) have been conducted in support of the Flagship.
- A Policy Toolkit on Municipal Waste Management: A Guide for Decision-Makers in the Mediterranean has been produced in English, French and Arabic.

Challenges and the way forward

Mediterranean cities recognize the many health, environmental, and other concerns associated with inadequate solid waste management; however, they face many demographic, social, cultural, economic and environmental challenges in properly managing this waste. Mappings and assessments of recent national and municipal waste and circular economy policies and strategies in the Mediterranean, reveal a varying landscape and make clear that each country has its own specific needs and priorities. However, shared, common challenges include:

- Increase of waste generation
- Improperly managed dumping sites
- Limited financial and staff capacity
- Lack of incentives for the engagement of the private sector
- Limited access to and technical knowledge related to waste reduction, sorting and recycling
- Lack of waste collection and disposal schemes
- Lack of participatory planning

- Limited data related to waste generation, treatment and composition
- Low public awareness on waste prevention
- Political turnover
- Policy fragmentation and lack of strong regulatory frameworks and policy incentives
- Difficulties in implementing strategies and policies
- Informal sectors and activities within the solid waste management system
- Limited available land

Overall, no “one size fits all” solution is suitable to promote sustainable waste management of resources in the Mediterranean region, in view of its social, economic and political heterogeneity. The Med4Waste Policy Toolkit on Municipal Waste Management has made a genuine effort to provide fit-for-purpose guidance for Mediterranean decision-makers, but also other stakeholders, on the way forward, through a specific set of recommendations addressing the local, national and Mediterranean levels.

Key references

- Policy Toolkit on Municipal Waste Management: A Guide for Decision-Makers in the Mediterranean, Med4Waste (2023) accessed at https://www.enicbcmed.eu/sites/default/files/2024-02/Med4Waste%20Policy%20Toolkit_double%20page%20low.pdf
- 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report
- State of the Environment and development in the Mediterranean. UNEP/MAP and Plan Bleu (2020). Nairobi.
- Green Circular Economy at the Mediterranean Level Including Green Skills and Jobs, UfM (2023) accessed at https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/%E2%9C%85-Report-on-Green-Circular-Economy_EN.pdf

Websites

- <https://bestpractices-waste-med.net/>
- www.wes-med.eu
- <https://www.enicbcmed.eu/projects/med4waste>

IX. Mediterranean Business Award for Environmental Innovation (WeMed Award)

Empowering Mediterranean businesses to adopt sustainable eco-innovation, life-cycle thinking, and eco-design models

Background

The linear economic model of production and consumption, commonly described as “take-make-use-dispose,” is unsustainable and is exacerbating global environmental challenges. Rising global temperatures, biodiversity loss, water stress, and increasing waste and emissions are among the urgent issues stemming from this approach. Addressing these crises demands a shift towards sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and low-carbon circular economies.

In response, the UNEP/MAP Regional Activity Centre for SCP, SCP-RAC “MedWaves”, established a definition of sustainable business models, which was endorsed by the Contracting Parties during COP22 of the Barcelona Convention in December 2021. These models deliver commercial solutions that create ecological value, safeguard the environment, and are economically viable and socially empowering (Decision IG.25/18 – Annex II).

In 2019, at COP21, the Contracting Parties tasked UNEP/MAP, through MedWaves, with launching the Mediterranean Business Award for Environmental Innovation, as a flagship initiative of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD).

The first WeMed Award was launched in 2021, piloting a platform to reward eco-innovation and life-cycle thinking. Since then, four editions of the WeMed Award have been held, with each edition spotlighting a specific sector and its challenges. Over 150 proposals have been received and 15 winners have been recognized, with €150,000+ awarded in cash and vouchers, supporting innovative solutions across the Mediterranean region.

The associated awareness-raising campaign reached 22 countries, directly engaging over 4,000 experts and policymakers, while targeting 6 million social media users.

The Flagship in numbers

Key figures

Since its inception, the WeMed Award has successfully organized four editions:

1. [WeMed Award 2021](#). The inaugural edition, funded by the European Union’s Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations via SwitchMed II, set the foundation for recognizing Mediterranean businesses pioneering in eco-innovation and sustainability. This pilot edition targeted both public authorities and SMEs.

2. [WeMed Award 2022](#). Building on the success of its first edition, the 2022 award was funded by the European Neighbourhood Instrument Cross-Border Cooperation for the Mediterranean (ENI CBC MED). This edition further expanded the award’s reach, spotlighting businesses in the Textile and Fashion industry and their efforts in circular solutions.

3. [WeMed Award 2023](#). The 2023 edition, also funded by ENI CBC MED, focused on scaling impact and fostering deeper regional cooperation and awarded both SMEs and Business Support Organizations.

4. [WeMed Award 2024](#). The most recent edition, funded by DG NEAR and the Waste Agency of Catalonia (ARC), targeted Sustainable Blue Economy.

These four editions have provided a platform for celebrating 15 innovative winners, offering €157,000 in cash and voucher-based prizes, and engaging thousands of stakeholders across the Mediterranean.

These figures provide a broader context for the importance of initiatives like the WeMed Award, highlighting the need for action in the region.

- Despite the growing popularity of the circular economy, global material circularity decreased

	from 9.1% in 2018 to 7.2% in 2023. (Source: Circle Economy's Circularity Gap Report 2024) - The Mediterranean region is one of the most affected by waste generation, with over 200 million tons of waste produced annually. (Source: UNEP/MAP - Mediterranean Action Plan, 2020) - Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) represent 99% of the business landscape in the Mediterranean, yet only a small fraction actively adopts sustainable practices (Source: European Commission, SME Performance Review, 2023). - The transition to sustainable consumption and production models could reduce Mediterranean waste generation by up to 25% and create more than 1 million green jobs by 2030. - The Mediterranean Sea accounts for just 1% of the world's oceans but contains nearly 7% of all marine biodiversity, making sustainable business practices critical for protecting its ecosystem (Source: WWF, 2021). MSSD Objective 5 Transition towards a green and blue economy MSSD Dashboard indicators 23 - Domestic material consumption, domestic material consumption per capita, and domestic material consumption per GDP Contributing to SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production
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Objectives

The WeMed Award seeks to accelerate the green transition in the Mediterranean by recognizing outstanding achievements in green and circular economy businesses, along with the organizations supporting them. It highlights innovative solutions that address environmental challenges while ensuring social inclusivity, with a special focus on gender equality.

The award not only celebrates exemplary businesses but also aims to inspire other entrepreneurs to integrate environmental and social innovations into their business models, encouraging their scalability across the region. By showcasing success stories, the award promotes an entrepreneurial ecosystem that fosters the growth of green and circular economy companies, driving sustainable development in the Mediterranean.

The award's jury is designed to reflect both gender and pan-Mediterranean geographical balance.

Through these efforts, the WeMed Award aims to create a ripple effect of sustainable practices and innovations, emphasizing the importance of supporting a diverse and inclusive network of actors in this ecosystem.

Leadership and partnership

The initiative is **directly managed** by UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention Secretariat and MedWaves – SCP/RAC

The following **countries** support the initiative: Spain

The **institutions/organizations/programmes** support the initiative: DG NEAR, Interreg Next Med, AECID, Waste Agency of Catalonia

Main achievements

Since its launch, the WeMed Award has made significant steps in promoting green and circular economy innovations across the Mediterranean. Key achievements include:

- Recognized 15 outstanding winners, awarding a total of €157,000 in cash and vouchers to support sustainable businesses in 6 different industrial sectors.
- Expanded its reach to 22 Mediterranean countries, fostering regional collaboration and knowledge sharing on sustainability practices.
- Engaged more than 4,000 experts and policymakers, building a strong network of stakeholders committed to environmental and social innovation.
- Reached 6 million social media users, via the EU-funded SwitchMed, raising awareness and inspiring action on sustainable consumption and production across the region.
- Prioritized gender equality, 50% of the awardee SMEs are led by women, with the jury reflecting gender balance – 55% of the jury members are women – and many of the recognized businesses incorporating gender-inclusive practices in their operations.

Challenges and the way forward

- **Role of “hosting countries”.** Hosting countries’ engagement could provide more visibility to the Award and a robust platforms for networking and collaboration among participants. This is essential for sharing best practices and fostering partnerships that drive collective action toward sustainable development.
- **Engagement of Private Partners.** Attracting private sector partners is crucial for ensuring the financial sustainability of the award. Engaging businesses and investors will not only provide necessary resources but also enhance the award’s visibility and credibility. Strategic partnerships with companies committed to sustainability can open new avenues for collaboration and investment.
- **2025 Edition.** The upcoming 2025 edition has been secured, supported by The Switchers Fund, part of the Switchers Support Programme financial facility. This initiative aims to leverage external funding for sustainable business models looking to scale up their operations. By connecting these businesses with financial resources and technical assistance, the WeMed Award can empower more entrepreneurs to drive sustainable change.

Key references

WeMed Award video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wthWLYKYD9k>

Websites

WeMed Award landing page: <https://www.wemedaward.org/#home>