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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Mediterranean Ecosystems Restoration:
Safeguarding Natural Heritage for People and Nature

A project labelled by the UfM



Union for the Mediterranean
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Context

Ecosystem restoration has become an essential part of the global environmental agenda to address climate change and biodiversity loss, as demonstrated by **the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030)**¹. In 2022, **the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)** set the target of at least 30 percent of areas of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine ecosystems being under effective restoration, to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity and connectivity². Policy alignment and effective governance are key to ensuring both the European Union (EU) and Mediterranean frameworks reflect the international agenda in their ambition and means for implementing restoration at scale.

At the EU level, **the Habitats Directive, the Birds Directive, the Water Framework Directive (WFD), the Floods Directive and the Nature Restoration Regulation (NRR)**, among others (e.g. the Marine Strategy Framework Directive), exhibit a relatively high degree of regulatory consistency. They share the overall objectives of protecting and restoring ecosystems. However, differences in geographical coverage, legal jurisdiction, and governance arrangements (e.g. enforcement mechanisms) create gaps in implementation, reporting cycles and integration between policies³.

At the Mediterranean level, under **the Barcelona Convention, the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD)** provides an integrated framework to adapt international commitments to regional conditions, guide national strategies and stimulate regional cooperation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Within the Barcelona Convention, both the **Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Protocol** and the **Specially Protected Areas/Biological Diversity (SPA/BD) Protocol** specifically address the need for restoring degraded coastal areas such as coastal wetlands (ICZM - Article 5 and 10) and other coastal habitats (dunes, estuaries). On biodiversity, **the Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean Region (SAPBIO)**⁴ translates and adapts the Post-2020 GBF commitments in the Mediterranean region as well as considers the main emerging issues, such as climate change, ecosystem services, the ecosystem approach, Nature-based Solutions (NbS), and the need for ecosystem restoration.

¹ <https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/about-un-decade>

² <https://www.cbd.int/gbf/targets/2>

³ <https://crossgov.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Policy-brief-nr-6-7.pdf>

⁴ https://www.rac-spa.org/sites/default/files/doc_spabio/post_2020_sapbio.pdf



The **EU NRR**, **WFD**, and the **Floods Directive** provide a robust foundation for reversing forest, wetlands, coastal and marine degradation, but their implementation still poses significant challenges. More substantial efforts are needed to go from current policy frameworks and commitments to territorial action, and to ensure that both EU and non-EU Mediterranean partners can align their restoration efforts under a shared vision and a common framework, which enables increased transboundary and regional cooperation.

The Interreg Euro-MED Natural Heritage Mission (NHM) reflects this vision by connecting technical expertise, policy frameworks and local realities through its Community of Practice on nature conservation. The NHM places particular emphasis on ecosystem restoration. After developing policy recommendations in 2024 targeting marine and coastal ecosystems restoration, this paper focuses on and extends the scope to **terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems, recognising forests and wetlands as critical ecosystems for the region's long-term resilience**. Drawing on collective knowledge from four out of sixteen thematic projects (StrategyMedFor, Wetlands4Change, LocAll4Flood, and WE GO COOP), the NHM is developing and testing **regional actions that generate policy evidence and concrete tools** to support the implementation of the leading EU and Mediterranean policy frameworks.

These policy recommendations provide **a practical roadmap for advancing the restoration of terrestrial, freshwater, and wetland ecosystems across the Mediterranean**. Building on field-tested approaches and regional collaboration, they translate project outcomes and technical achievements into actionable policy guidance to support the implementation of the EU and Mediterranean frameworks. These ten recommendations reflect a shared vision for resilient and sustainable Mediterranean landscapes. They promote **integrated governance and planning, inclusive, empowered, and gender-responsive participation, innovative financing, in-depth research and innovation, peacebuilding, and a more substantial alignment between EU and non-EU partners** within the broader Euro-Mediterranean cooperation frameworks, grounded in the core principles of transparency and accountability that underpin effective environmental governance.



Key Policy Recommendations

<p>Integrated planning</p>	<p>01 Develop an integrated Source-to-Sea governance framework tailored to Mediterranean contexts, embedding multilevel governance, macroregional and transboundary coordination.</p> <hr/> <p>02 Integrate restoration into science-based spatial planning to prioritize areas to be restored, monitor progress and coordinate knowledge to scale up nature-based solutions and bridge the science-policy gap.</p> <hr/> <p>03 Recognise the key role of wetlands and forests in increasing the resilience of the Mediterranean at the climate/biodiversity nexus, by fully integrating their biodiversity values and ecosystem services into land-use planning, agricultural policies and urban development.</p>
<p>Inclusive & participatory governance</p>	<p>04 Empower local communities by promoting co-management models that transform citizens from beneficiaries into active stewards, including the provision of local jobs and livelihood diversification opportunities.</p> <hr/> <p>05 Promote inclusive, fair, and equitable participation across all stages of the restoration process, empowering underrepresented, vulnerable and peripheral communities and groups, ensuring an intergenerational perspective.</p>
<p>Innovation, financing & knowledge systems</p>	<p>06 Develop innovative financing and compliance mechanisms to ensure long-term sustainability of restoration efforts, engaging both public and private actors.</p> <hr/> <p>07 Promote and advance appropriate user-friendly technologies, to advance restoration efforts, thereby improving prioritisation, decision-making, and resilience.</p> <hr/> <p>08 Encourage innovative and ambitious research and training agenda to foster interdisciplinary collaboration, knowledge co-creation, and support long-term monitoring, open source data and effective technology transfer.</p>
<p>Transboundary governance and peacebuilding</p>	<p>09 Preserve and restore natural resources to strengthen transboundary cooperation, build trust between groups, and reduce the risk of conflict over shared resources.</p>
<p>(re)Building trust</p>	<p>10 Strengthen accountability and transparency in the policy processes in line with agreed conventions and legal frameworks by ensuring that decision-makers are accountable to their constituents.</p>



Mediterranean forests and wetlands are facing increasing threats

The Mediterranean basin's terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems are facing accelerated degradation under climate change, land-use pressures resulting from growing urbanization, and hydrological imbalance. The Mediterranean is warming 20% faster than the global average, with up to –30% annual precipitation declines projected in some regions (MedECC, 2020).

Mediterranean forests and other wooded lands cover 28% of the region's land area. The forest area in the region increased from 84.6 million hectares in 1990 to 99.2 million hectares in 2020 largely driven by gains in western Mediterranean countries. Land use change in the three sub-regions presents contrasting scenarios: urban expansion and agriculture are growing in the south, while land abandonment and forest regrowth are more common in the north and east. However, Mediterranean forests are increasingly threatened by land degradation, climate change, wildfires, demographic shifts and economic changes⁵.

The region's wetlands present an even starker picture: Mediterranean wetlands, particularly coastal ones, are disappearing faster than any other ecosystem in the region. 56% of natural wetlands have been lost, and degradation continues, with an additional 12% decline since 1990. Most of these ecosystems lie in coastal zones and floodplains, where population density is now four times the regional average. Urban sprawl, agricultural expansion, and the overexploitation of freshwater are the main drivers. Between 1990 and 2020, 54% of wetland conversions were to agricultural land, 36% to artificial reservoirs or aquaculture, and 10% to built-up areas. Per-capita water availability in the southern and eastern Mediterranean has dropped by 40% over the past 30 years⁶.

⁵ <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/5ce9afc8-58a1-4c5c-bc0e-24b4da193a66>

⁶ <https://medwet.org/mediterranean-wetlands-outlook-3-mwo-3/>



Territorial solutions to Mediterranean policy challenges

The lessons emerging from the NHM Thematic Projects and other regional initiatives provide practical pathways for embedding restoration into Mediterranean policies and programmes.

Actions are organised around four pillars: integrated governance, inclusive participation, innovation and financing, and capacity building, reflecting the needs for coherent governance, science-based planning, and sustained investment. These measures translate the field-tested practices of the Thematic Projects and the perceptive contributions of the NHM community during the session of the 26th November of the 2025 Annual Institutional Dialogue, into operational guidance for governments, regional institutions, and local authorities, to upscale restoration efforts in the Mediterranean.

In addition, the deliberations during institutional dialogue emphasised two cross-cutting governance conditions essential to effective restoration in the Mediterranean: **peacebuilding and accountability**. These dimensions are now incorporated throughout the four pillars and reflected in the territorial solutions below.

1. Integrated & ecosystem-based governance

Conservation and restoration efforts are most efficient when considered as part of a broader ecological and social system rather than isolated sites. Coordination across landscapes ensures that interventions account for the interdependencies between terrestrial ecosystems, such as forests, wetlands and rivers, with human activities.

This requires multilevel coordination, from the national and regional to the local level, that is aligned with existing frameworks like the Barcelona Convention, Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and Biodiversity Protocols, SAPBIO, the Rio Conventions, the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and National Restoration Plans, in order for the restoration efforts to be met. In other terms, the multilevel governance in the Mediterranean is not hindered by the absence of tools, as many exist, but rather by the failure to operationalize the existing tools and instruments at a territorial level. Among these, wetlands contracts emerged as one of the most concrete, action-oriented governance tools available capable of translating high-level policy



commitments into locally owned restoration outcomes. Originated in France during the 1980s as Contrats de Rivière, wetlands contracts bring **public authorities, land users, municipalities, civil society, scientists and private actors around a single shared agreement**, defining clear responsibilities, financing mechanisms, monitoring obligations and long-term stewardship commitments around an integrated nature resources governance.

Strengthening integrated governance also involves creating the conditions for stability, cooperation, and trust, especially in transboundary basins and in politically fragile contexts, where restoration can contribute to reducing resource pressures and support peacebuilding and conflict-prone planning.

- Establish territorial coordination systems such as co-management boards, restoration agreements such as wetland contracts, and align local priorities with regional and national strategies.
- Plan at landscape scales, embedding conservation and restoration objectives into territorial planning, climate adaptation strategies, and water or urban management plans.
- Implement adaptive governance, where lessons from local projects inform policy development, enabling continuous improvement and responsiveness to changing conditions.
- Integration of climate and biodiversity policies across sectors, ensuring restoration goals are considered alongside economic objectives, and sectoral policies like disaster risk reduction, etc.
- Promote regional cooperation and conflict-sensitive planning in shared ecosystems to support peacebuilding, improve resource governance, and reduce tensions over freshwater, wetlands and forest resources.
- Embed transparency and legal clarity in governance processes to foster trust between institutions and communities, strengthening accountability for restoration decisions.

Territorial solutions

Territorial solution 1: [Wetlands contracts and its Community of practice \(CoP\)](#) as participatory governance tools

The continued loss of wetland areas and the increasing threats on these ecosystems in the Mediterranean calls for urgent action and implementation of effective management measures. **Since the 1980s**, Wetland Contracts have been proving their effectiveness in many different countries and contexts. **Wetland Contracts are voluntary agreements, not legally binding but based on mutual commitment**, which bring together local authorities, communities,



associations and economic actors with a view to the protection, restoration and sustainable use of aquatic ecosystems such as lagoons, rivers, lakes, coastal areas and marshes, as defined by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and their catchment areas.

The main goal of a Wetland Contract is to create a common framework of cooperation, where different parties agree on:

- an **area-wide strategy**, covering the entire wetland and, if relevant, its watershed;
- **shared objectives**, defined collectively and based on the ecological, social, and economic value of the site;
- **concrete actions**, distributed among stakeholders, so that each actor contributes according to their role and capacity;
- **monitoring and evaluation tools**, to track progress, ensure accountability, and adapt management strategies over time.

To date, **more than 250 wetland contracts were signed** and 23 EU-funded projects contributed to the development and expansion of this tool in EU Mediterranean countries (Croatia, France, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, and the MENA region (Lebanon, Morocco)).

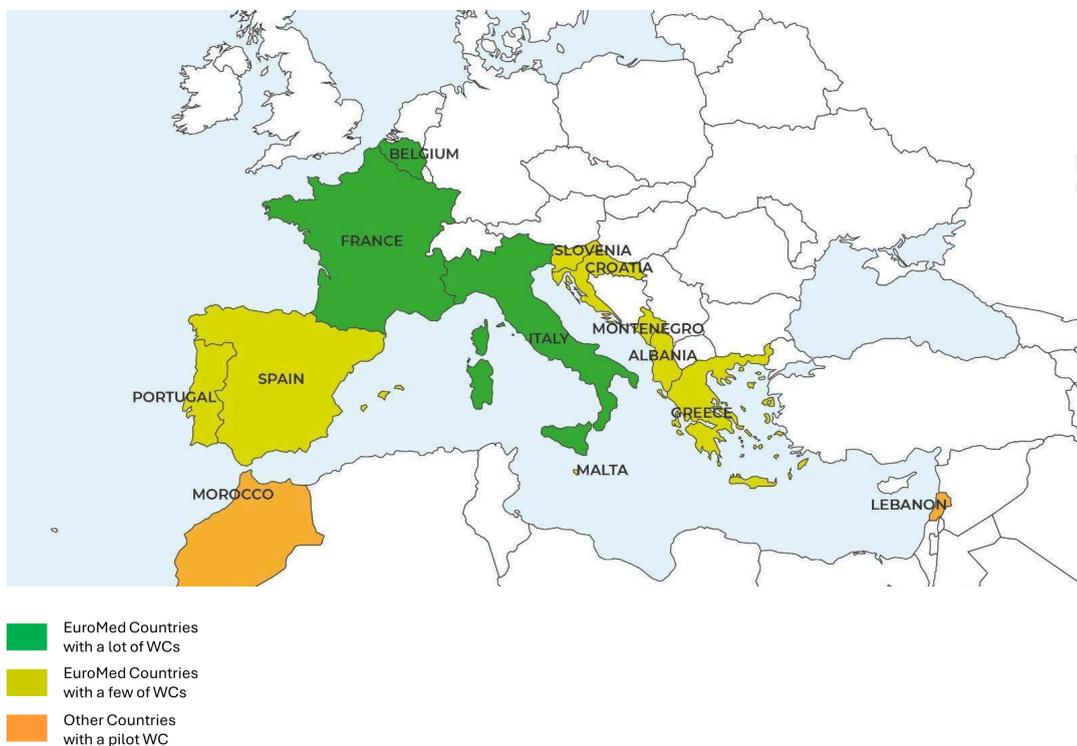


Figure 1: Distribution of wetland contracts in the Mediterranean. Source: WE GO COOP project

To continue developing this tool beyond individual projects, WE GO COOP partners (MedWet, Roma Tre University, Anatoliki S.A, the Andalusian Federation of Municipalities and Provinces, the



Vransko Lake Nature Park, the Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania, RCDI – Development and Innovation Network) **launched in November 2025 the first Mediterranean Community of Practice on Wetland Contracts**. This platform allows regional partners to join the movement and contribute to the development of wetlands contracts by providing opportunity for collaboration, exchange, and policy support among all actors engaged in wetland management.

Policy recommendations were formulated to address UNEP/MAP representatives, national, regional and local authorities as well as wetland users and practitioners to scale up wetland contracts and to increase recognition of this tool by:

- **engaging relevant stakeholders** for community-led wetland management
- **developing place-based strategies** for integrated wetland management
- **identifying win-win solutions** for sustainable wetland management
- **enhancing financial capacity** for effective wetland management
- **improving and mainstreaming recognition** in EU and national policies/strategies
- **harmonizing** of methodological approaches
- **fostering** networking and dissemination
- **mobilizing** of financial resources

2. Inclusive & participatory governance

The long-term success of ecosystem conservation and restoration depends on a socially fair and inclusive involvement of communities with full access for all groups across gender, age, education levels, minorities and vulnerable groups. Participatory governance enhances legitimacy, strengthens social acceptance, and ensures that restoration actions are grounded in equity, intergenerational perspectives, cultural heritage and global justice.

An inclusive and participatory governance entails also an equal participation of women in decision-making. Despite UN bodies consistently affirming that peace agreements, for instance, are significantly more likely to last when women are involved in decision-making, with research showing a 35% higher chance of agreements lasting over 15 years when women participate meaningfully, women's participation is often sidelined, and their contributions are often overlooked. Therefore, mainstreaming gender equality across all stages of biodiversity planning and implementation is becoming a foundation. This could be done by removing barriers to



women's participation and leadership, expanding their access to tools and training, and strengthening sex-disaggregated data systems to guide equitable and effective governance.

Moreover, inclusive governance requires open access to information, clear communication on decision-making, and mechanisms ensuring authorities uphold environmental commitments.

- Create and develop participatory decision-making spaces for citizens, local organizations, women, youth, and marginalized groups to co-design conservation and restoration plans.
- Foster community stewardship, encouraging citizen participation in monitoring, maintenance, and hands-on restoration work.
- Ensure inclusive and meaningful participation of youth, expand women's access to capacity-building and ICT tools, and systematically collect sex-disaggregated data to assess gender-differentiated impacts.
- Use transparency, open ecological data, and accountability mechanisms to rebuild trust and empower community involvement.
- Strengthen equity-based and culturally grounded approaches that reconnect people with nature and support intergenerational stewardship.

Territorial solutions

Territorial solution 2: [Participatory methodologies](#) to design coastal adaptation and marine strategies - Climagine, Scenario Workshops and Adaptation Pathways (SWAPs) & Democracy Labs (DLABs) (tools available by 2027)

Participatory methodologies like the Climagine approach developed by Plan Bleu are key to supporting the transition to sustainable and adaptive management of coastal areas and promoting climate and socio-economic resilience in coastal communities. The Interreg Euro-MED INCORE-MED project (2025-2027) is currently implementing SWAPs and DLABs methodologies in four pilot sites to support the development of ICZM and MSP tools to address coastal management in relation to climate change adaptation.

Climagine:

Climagine is a participatory foresight methodology that focuses on the sustainable management of Mediterranean coastal areas and how they are affected by the specific challenges of climate variability and change. Developed by Plan Bleu in collaboration with the Bayswater Institute in the United Kingdom in the early 2000s, it has been applied in many Mediterranean coastal areas. As a participatory method, it engages stakeholders in a coastal zone in a



consultation process that aims to inform the development of ICZM tools, as well as coastal management and adaptation solutions tailored to local and national contexts. As a forward-looking method, it mobilises these actors in particular to contribute to a broader reflection on the current state of their coastal zone and on the main factors that define its potential development trajectories in the future⁷.

Building on these experiences, Plan Bleu has mobilized Climagine under Child Project 2.1 of the MedProgramme (2020–2026), funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by UNEP/MAP, to support the development of integrated coastal strategies and plans in several Mediterranean countries:

- Morocco: Tangier-Tetouan-Al Hoceima region, where Climagine contributed to the development of a Coastal Plan coordinated by PAP/RAC⁸.
- Montenegro: Bay of Kotor, with a similar process for the coastal plan⁹.
- Lebanon: Ongoing application for the new National ICZM Strategy and the Integrated Management Plan for the Damour area

The Climagine approach is based on **a series of structured participatory workshops**, typically organized in four stages:

- Identifying sustainability dimensions, key challenges, and priority sectors.
- Defining sustainability indicators.
- Developing a “band of equilibrium” (safe operating space) for each indicator.
- Formulating strategic recommendations for coastal plans.
- Each pilot site (Morocco and Montenegro) held four workshops, with reports and outcomes published by Plan Bleu.

⁷ <https://planbleu.org/en/projects/climagine/>

⁸ https://planbleu.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/MP-SP-2.1_Rapport-final-Climagine_SRL-TTA_Plan-Bleu-PAO-Finalisee.pdf

⁹ https://planbleu.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/MedP-CP2.1_Kotor-Bay-Climagine-Final_EN.pdf

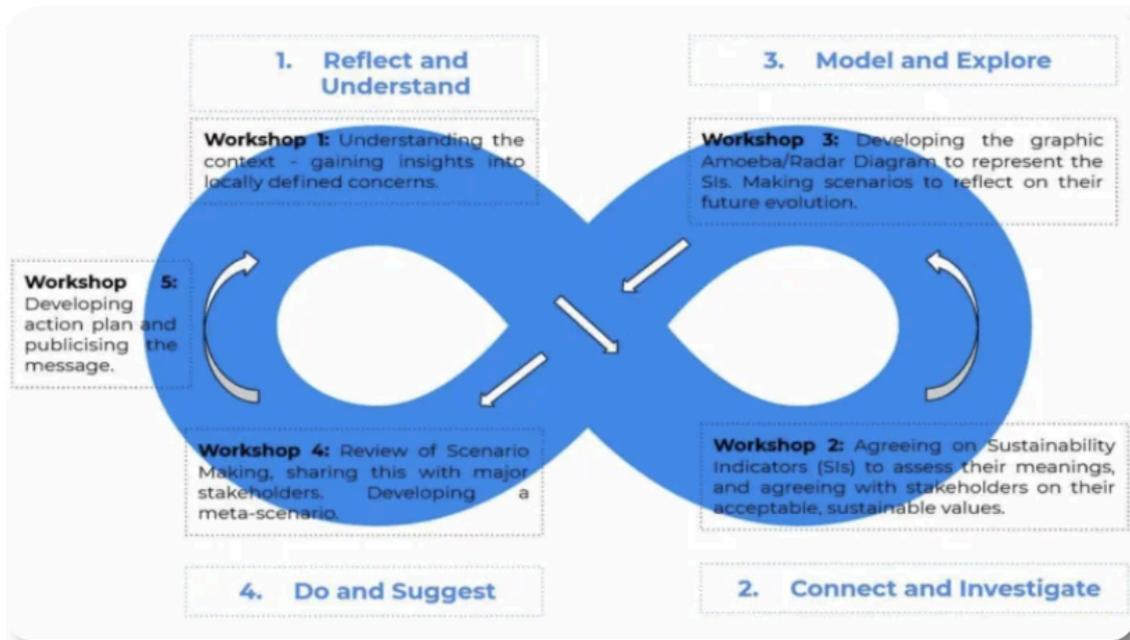


Figure 2: The Climagine process. Source: Plan Bleu

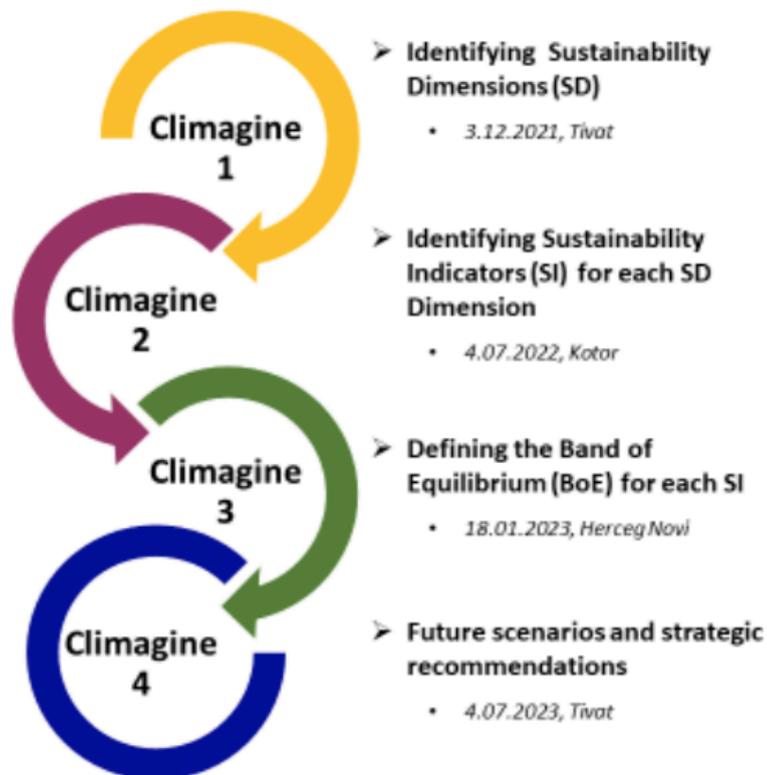


Figure 3: The Climagine process in Kotor Bay. Source: Plan Bleu, 2024



INCORE-MED is testing and adapting DLabs and SWAP methodologies in Integrate Coastal Zone Management and Maritime Spatial Planning frameworks of 4 pilot areas, engaging citizens, NGOs, regional authorities, and researchers. The outcomes will be embedded into local institutional strategies and scaled across the Euro-Mediterranean region through an adoption pathway toolkit. **Results will be expected to feed into strategies for climate adaptation in 2027.**

- **Democracy Labs** are participatory spaces where public authorities, civil society, citizens, and experts collaboratively explore and test innovative democratic practices in real-life contexts. They go beyond consultation by fostering dialogue, collective learning, and experimentation around concrete governance challenges. The key outcomes of Democracy Labs include strengthened trust and mutual understanding among stakeholders, increased citizen engagement and capacity, and more responsive decision-making. They also produce practical outputs such as co-designed solutions to specific issues.
- The **SWAP methodology** (Scenario Workshop and Adaptation Pathway) is a participatory process that supports climate adaptation planning. It enables stakeholders to explore plausible future scenarios and to jointly identify and sequence adaptation measures. The methodology results in adaptation pathways that show how actions can be prioritised and adjusted over time, providing decision-makers with a practical framework for flexible long-term adaptation strategies.

Territorial solution 3: Participatory mapping and planning as tools for locally driven restoration priorities: [COASTRUST stewardship agreements](#)

Growing interest in initiatives to protect natural areas and restore ecosystems—also due to their role in local climate change adaptation strategies—has increased the use of governance tools in recent years that involve collaboration between public and private entities to improve the effectiveness of biodiversity enhancement efforts. These include **Environmental Contracts** and **the Land Stewardship Agreement (LSA)**.

The Environmental Contract is a collaborative governance tool that operates at the strategic and territorial scale. Based on the principles of vertical and horizontal subsidiarity, it relies on voluntary and negotiated commitments to strengthen cohesion among stakeholders across different administrative levels and policy sectors. It is grounded in a shared territorial vision developed through an intersectoral approach and a participatory process involving public authorities,



associations, and local communities. Its aim is to promote the sustainable management of the territory by integrating natural resource protection, hydrogeological risk prevention, ecological and landscape enhancement, and socio-economic development.

The Land Stewardship Agreement functions at the local and operational level as a voluntary public-private collaboration tool. It encourages cooperation between landowners and land users – such as farmers, foresters, shepherds, hunters, fishers, tourism operators, and environmental organisations – to support the long-term conservation and sustainable use of natural and cultural landscapes. These agreements are based on participatory commitments involving a broad spectrum of civil society and promote the idea that biodiversity conservation is compatible with productive activities. Central to this approach is the principle of shared responsibility in the management of natural resources. Typically lasting around ten years, LSAs formalise stakeholders' commitments to the implementation, management, and maintenance of the territory, specifically in natural and rural contexts. They provide an institutional and financial framework that ensures continuity over time, while enabling landowners and users to become active stewards of landscape quality and biodiversity.

Within the **Interreg Euro-MED Coastrust project**, LSAs are applied, for the first time, to marine and coastal areas exposed to anthropogenic pressures such as urbanisation, pollution, biodiversity loss, climate change impacts and overfishing. In this context, they support multi-actor governance engagements involving stakeholders operating along the coast and foster the sustainable management of both terrestrial and marine natural resources.

3. Innovation, financing & knowledge systems

Ensuring that conservation and restoration efforts are effective and sustainable requires governance, technical and financial innovation to support evidence-based decision-making and long-term planning, while remaining economically viable. This also encompasses the need to act on the recurring lack of high-resolution spatial data and the continuously identified data gaps, which hinder the effectiveness of planning, implementation, and evaluation of restoration actions.

- Design and test innovative financing mechanisms to sustain conservation and restoration efforts in the long term. This includes testing and upscaling mechanisms such as payment for ecosystem services, voluntary and compliance carbon markets, and blended finance arrangements that bring together public authorities, private investors, and local stakeholders, as well as tax exemptions for restoration. These tools can shift conservation and restoration from a perceived cost to a long-term economic opportunity, ensuring that



interventions remain viable and scalable. There is also an urgent need to strengthen the public structural financing, as the EU, environmental agencies currently have significant budgetary and personnel constraints that limit their ability to implement the Nature Restoration Regulation and other requirements. A widely acknowledged, substantial financing shortfall exists in the restorative work to be done, and past implementation of environmental legislation has been impacted negatively by deficiencies in financial and human resources. According to the [2025 Environmental Implementation Review](#), Europe currently invests around €27.5 billion a year in biodiversity, leaving an annual shortfall of €37.4 billion to meet the €65 billion needed for biodiversity and soil health. Stabilizing and increasing public budgets for Ministries, General Directorates, technical offices and agencies responsible for environmental implementation is therefore crucial.

- Support the deployment of advanced technologies and digital tools to strengthen planning, monitoring and decision-making. Expanding the use of geospatial platforms, remote sensing, and real-time early-warning systems.
- Establish, consolidate, secure finance and upscale long-term monitoring programs with an integrated, coordinated and harmonized vision to support data gathering across all biological groups and habitats and inform planning, management and evaluation of restoration actions. While important flagship monitoring experiences exist across the Mediterranean, they remain unevenly distributed, underfunded and often biased toward well-known species. A leading example is [the Natural Heritage and Biodiversity Observatory of Catalonia](#), developed by the Government of Catalonia with CREAF, which integrates data from multiple standardized monitoring schemes, and is developing the first Living Planet Index to include invertebrates.
- Explore and test innovative, inclusive governance schemes based on co-created knowledge and the design of durable institutions, embedding restoration and conservation into the usual way of life, while ensuring long-term environmental stability, technical capacity and public transparency and accountability for restoration implementation.

Territorial solutions

Territorial solution 4: Economic tools for ecosystem restoration such as Payment for Ecosystems Services, Carbon Markets and Nature Credits ([ARTEMIS project](#))

As the Mediterranean faces ecological decline and socio-economic instability, it is crucial to accelerate the transition to a sustainable development model in order to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ensure a fair and prosperous future for the region. This requires



not only stronger environmental policies but also a realignment of economic and financial flows and mechanisms, ensuring that economic policies support both environmental stewardship and socio-economic wellbeing¹⁰. The EU Nature Restoration Regulation provides legally binding targets for restoring ecosystems by 2030 and 2050. However, it remains unclear how robust and scalable business models can be established to generate sustained economic returns from ecosystem restoration efforts and how they will be financed. Therefore, resource mobilization is key and private investors will need to step in.

The **ARTEMIS project** addresses *Posidonia oceanica* restoration and strategically leverages four distinct Mediterranean locations to develop and validate robust restoration and financing approaches. These pilots serve as real-world laboratories generating critical data on costs, success factors, stakeholder engagement, and measurable outcomes needed to structure credible investments.



Figure 4: ARTEMIS map of Pilot Sites

The project is currently assessing the potential development of Nature Credits or PES schemes based on Pilot Sites (PS) Ecosystem Services (ES) baseline assessments and plans are to test them at local level. PES schemes or Nature Credits will be developed based on Blue Carbon and Biodiversity values collected during fieldwork. A stakeholder mapping methodology was designed

¹⁰ <https://planbleu.org/en/publications/green-finance/> (October, 2025)



and implemented at PS which allowed for identifying key stakeholders, including potential direct and indirect beneficiaries of seagrass ES to engage with. The project will deliver by June 2026 a methodology for Nature Credits/PES schemes co creation and Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) will be signed between restoration practitioners and public/private actors for seagrass restoration. In some cases, a Seagrass Restoration Framework will be proposed to support the national implementation of restoration activities.

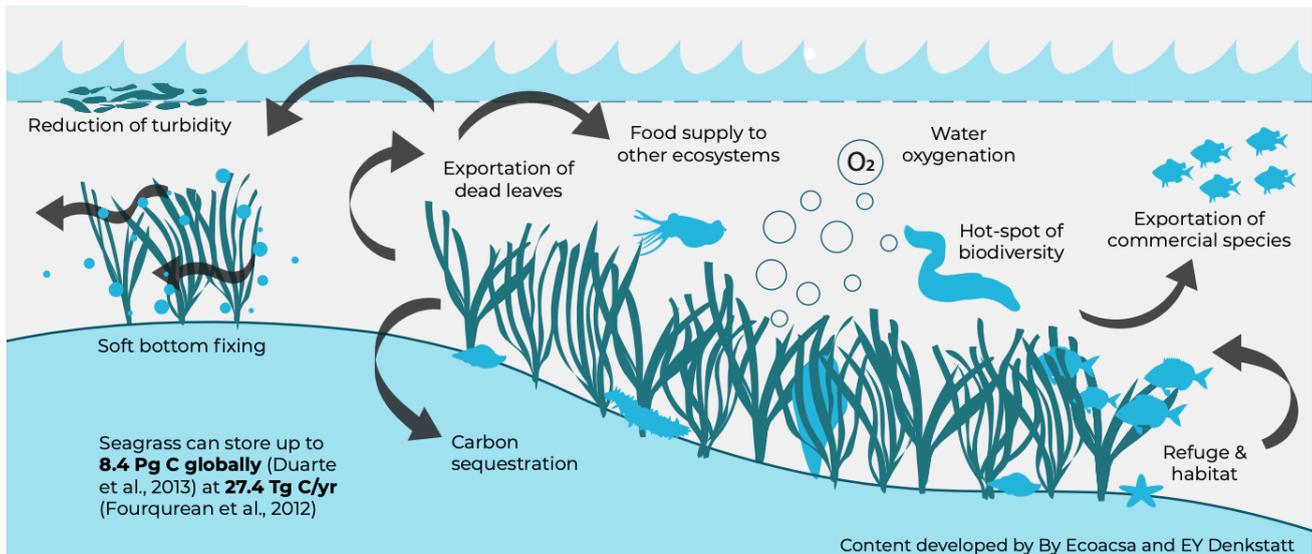


Figure 5: Seagrass meadows' ecosystem services. Source: ARTEMIS, 2025

Territorial solution 5: Geospatial tools for improving restoration planning, climate change adaptation and resilience of forest ecosystems ([StrategyMedFor](#))

The StrategyMedFor project aims **to develop a robust and adaptable strategy for sustainable management of Mediterranean forests, considering future climate scenarios.** It focuses on the Balkan region. Testing sites are located in the Dinaric Alps of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Galičica National Park in North Macedonia, and Samaria National Park in Greece. In each of them, stewardship and locally grounded planning and prioritisation were key to identifying and prioritizing restoration actions. Its innovative approach resides in its **integration of geotechnologies, in-depth research, and collaborative partnerships.**

Collective rethinking of the meaning of Sustainable Forest Management in the Mediterranean context by project partners, its associated partners and key stakeholders in the region, highlighted the importance of integrating aspects related to:



- Climate Regulation and Carbon Sequestration
- Biodiversity Conservation
- Soil and Water Resource Protection
- Ecosystem Services Delivery
- Socioeconomic Benefits at Local and Regional Levels

Through a comprehensive literature review and a highly consultative process along with key stakeholders, the StrategyMedFor partnership has developed eleven **supplementary policy indicators tailored to Mediterranean forests**, which complement the Forest Europe framework by adapting it to the Mediterranean context.

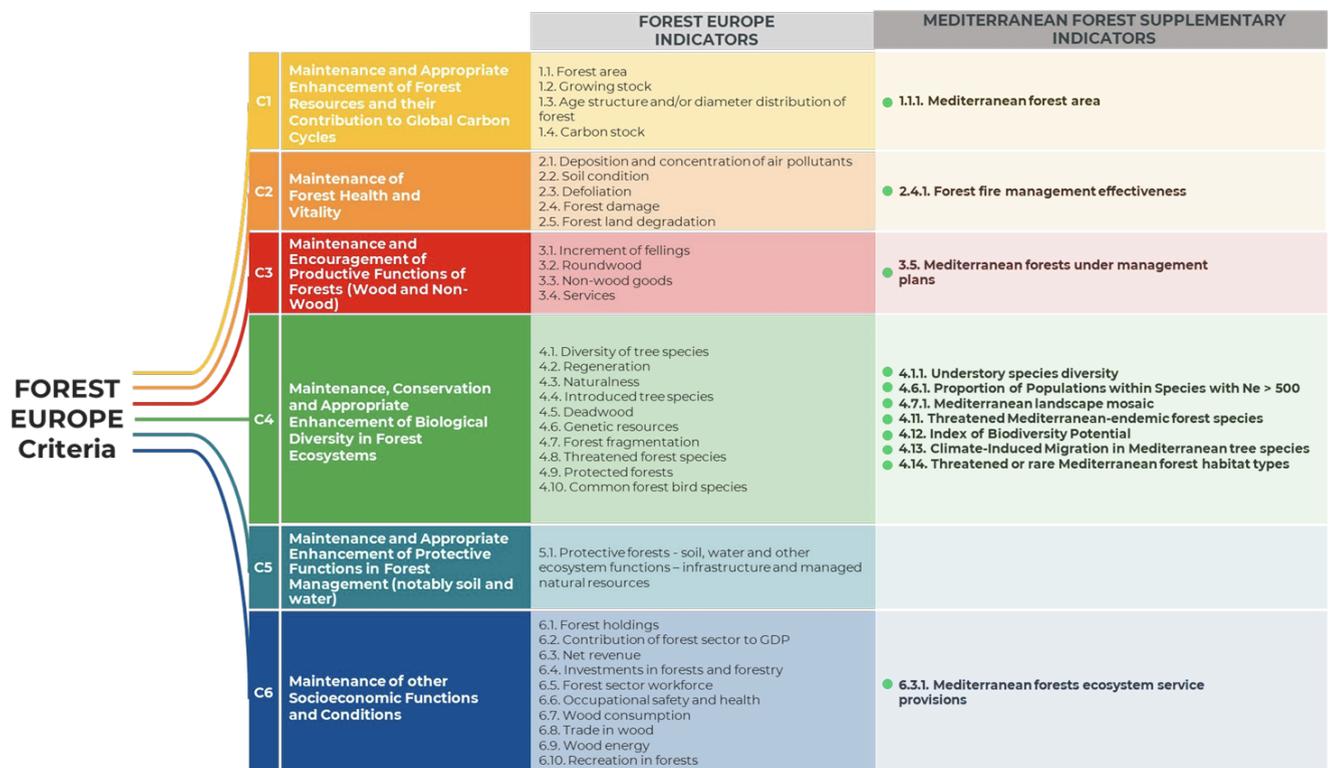


Figure 6: Diagram illustrating the final set of 11 Mediterranean forest SIs aligned with the Forest Europe criteria framework (StrategyMedFor 2025)

StrategyMedFor took a step forward, translating some of these indicators into information layers and geodata, and making them publicly available via an interactive tool hosted in the **Mediterranean Biodiversity Protection Knowledge Platform** to support the assessment and progress monitoring of these indicators against set targets at different scales, and guide restoration planning at regional and local scales.

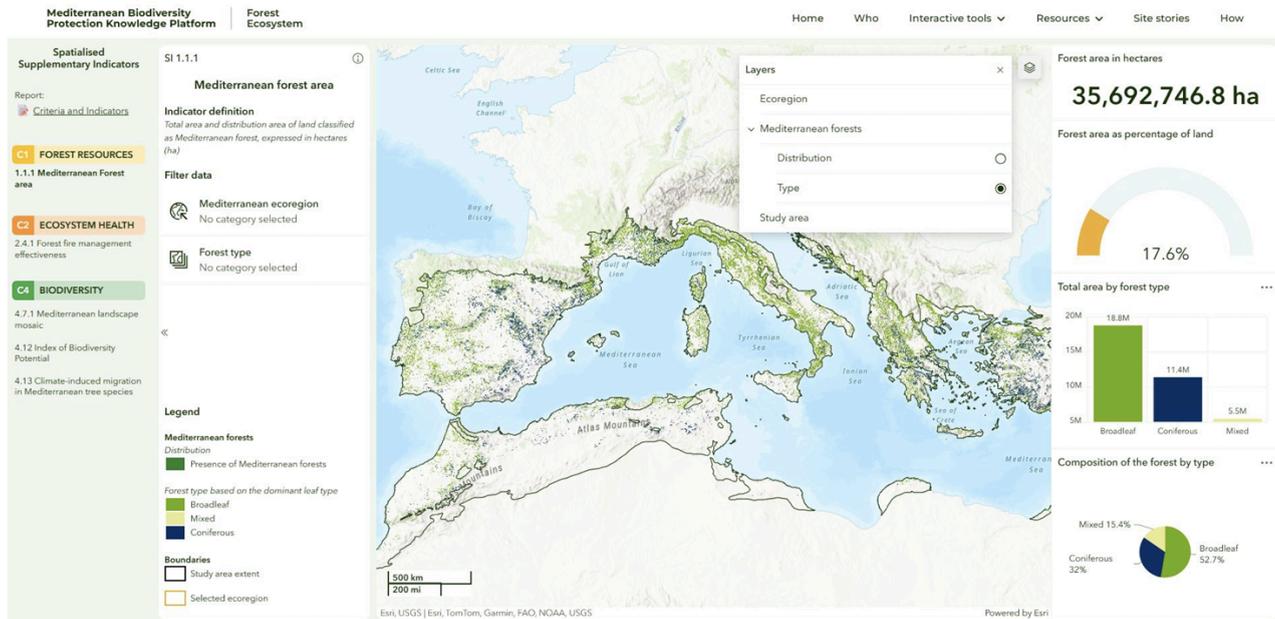


Figure 2: Snapshot of the StrategyMedFor interactive viewer displaying one of the spatialized supplementary indicators.

In addition to developing spatial proxies for the supplementary indicators, other spatial products produced by the project to support decision making include a map of **Mediterranean forest area**, categorized by typologies, **assessments** of the **impact of fire** in Mediterranean forest ecosystems and **priority areas for protection, restoration, and resilient management**, and maps of predicted **changes in habitat suitability** for selected tree species based on future climate change scenarios.

The geospatial tools and methodologies currently being developed by the StrategyMedFor project support the EU Nature Restoration Regulation by integrating **spatial information** into EU and national restoration plans, **fulfilling EU reporting obligations** through:

- A standardized and long-term framework for data sharing and monitoring adapted to the Mediterranean context.
- 11 supplementary policy indicators, which are adapted to sustainable management of forests in the Mediterranean, tackling, among others, the issues of forest fires, biodiversity potential, genetics, risk of extinction, climate-induced migration, and ecosystem services provisions.
- Science-based data and recommendations to support decision-makers to develop or adjust management practices to maintain, and, if possible, improve, the status of forests (e.g., mitigation of fire risk).



- Site-level action plans, in which different restoration practices were tested on the ground based on the territorial needs, including some that are general and could be replicated, and others that would need to be adapted to specific environmental conditions to be transferred.
- Tools for policy makers at the high level, and managers on the ground.
- Publication and active promotion of the developed products to interested countries.
- Provide support to stakeholders in the use of geospatial tools.
- Tools adaptable to reply to questions about prioritization based on levels of data availability and quality, territorial scale, pressures, and takers' needs and resources.

To fulfil **EU reporting obligations**, standardization is key for the successful implementation of the Nature Restoration Regulation. The project recommends:

- Adopting database standards as early as possible.
- Adopting open software platforms and tools.
- Preparing training courses and free material for users.
- Developing a Mediterranean network of users for monitoring and data provision.
- Organizing exchange visits between user teams to solve problems by sharing examples and lessons learned.

4. Capacity building and knowledge exchange

Upscaling and sustaining long-term conservation and restoration efforts depend on well-trained practitioners, informed communities, mechanisms for sharing expertise and experience across regions and sectors, founded on the principles of peacebuilding, transparency, and accountability. Building capacities and knowledge exchange in fragile and transboundary contexts entails enhancement of cooperation and trust, with full assurance that restoration contributes to social cohesion and stability without jeopardising equalities or exacerbating tensions. Beyond the realm of technical skills, this requires open access to knowledge, clearly defined responsibilities, effective monitoring systems, and public accountability of decision-makers as well as the behavioural change required to sustain these processes over time. At the same time, awareness-raising, education and citizen-based monitoring are essential to reconnect people with nature, build long-term public support for restoration, and transform citizens from passive beneficiaries into active stewards of ecosystems.



- Design targeted training and certification programmes for municipal staff, farmers, engineers, and youth networks to strengthen skills in forest management, hydrological planning and management, NbS design, and digital monitoring tools.
- Promote awareness and community engagement initiatives that foster behavioural change and long-term support for restoration. This involves deploying educational materials, expanding citizen-based forest and wetland monitoring involving schools and community groups, and supporting local facilitators who sustain dialogue and participation beyond individual project cycles.
- Establish and scale regional knowledge-exchange platforms, workshops and fora that enable coordinated learning and harmonised monitoring across territories.
- Ensure interdisciplinary capacity building, integrating ecological, social, legal, economic and governance expertise.

Territorial solutions

Territorial solution 6: Local training programmes to build technical skills for effective restoration ([Wetland4Change's transnational hub](#))

The **Wetlands4Change** project focuses on implementing and demonstrating wetland-based solutions to improve carbon sequestration and flood regulation. By developing and promoting sustainable wetland management practices, the project aims to provide mapping methodologies, wetland ecosystem service maps and a decision-support matrix that can be adopted by wetland managers and policy makers to implement conservation and restoration priorities. These outputs help to provide a comprehensive overview of co-benefits, trade-offs and effects of different management and restoration options.

The project leverages its findings for restoration planning and implementation by establishing a harmonized, science-based knowledge base (harmonised data collection and monitoring methodologies and the Euro-Mediterranean wetland geoportal) as well as by fostering transfer, capacity building and stakeholder engagement at local to regional level.

Territorial solution 7: Community engagement and awareness raising initiatives in restoration projects (Designing education materials and activities to enhance people's awareness and preparedness to flash floods ([LocAll4Flood](#)))

The LOCAL4FLOOD project aims to improve flash flood risk management in Mediterranean regions through an Integrated Multi-stakeholder Governance Model (IMGM). The project particularly focuses on:



- Prevention through the development of early-warning systems to improve flash flood prediction
- Adaptation through the design of educational materials and activities to raise awareness and improve response capacity among citizens and authorities;
- and Mitigation through the promoting Nature-based Solutions (NbS) to reduce flash flood risks.

The project works in 9 pilot watersheds to test and implement solutions.



Figure 8: Map of the LOCALL4FLOOD pilot areas

The project puts a particular emphasis on community engagement and awareness raising initiatives. Several products were developed such as **a catalogue of NbS for flood risk management** or **a toolbox for decision-makers and practitioners** to implement sustainable solutions **to mitigate flash floods**. The catalogue of NbS provides technical descriptions of examples for decision makers to identify what suits best their needs. From natural inland wetland restoration, afforestation and reforestation in upstream areas to river floodplain restoration/channel renaturalization, these solutions can be applied in **urban-industrial, natural or urban-natural areas**. The development of educational materials and activities were key to improve knowledge and acceptance of NbS and the project has developed two types of educational resources: **quick reference documents** and **awareness-raising documents**.



Together, these resources aim to inform the public about flash floods, raise awareness of weather warnings, provide vital safety advice and use fun materials to engage users of all ages. Exhibitions, leaflets, posters and magnets were created to enhance public awareness and acceptance of flood risk mitigation measures. Furthermore, the project developed interactive resources, including the *Flut Island* board game and online game (both recommended for ages 11+), which explore the causes of floods, as well as a giant river basin puzzle designed for primary and secondary students to visualise ecological functions and biodiversity, ecosystem services, and human–environment interactions through nature-based solutions.

Exhibition and Leaflet

FLASH FLOODS
Risc d'inundacions sobtades en conques mediterrànies

Mapa de perillositat d'inundació a Gurb per a diferents escenaris segons el període de retorn de 10 (T10), 100 (T100) i 500 anys (T500)

Associem un període de retorn (T) a un escenari d'inundació quan aquest té una probabilitat estadística d'esdevenir-se un cop cada 10, 100 o 500 anys. És important destacar que parlem de probabilitats, no de certeses.

La Directiva Europea d'Inundacions estableix que els organismes de conca de cada Demarcació Hidrogràfica (p.ex. l'Agència Catalana de l'Aigua a les conques internes de Catalunya) elaborin un Pla de Gestió del Risc d'Inundació (PGRI), que s'actualitza cada sis anys. Els PGRI identifiquen les zones amb risc i incorporen mapes de perillositat i risc —amb escenaris d'inundació i afectacions a persones, activitats i patrimoni—, a partir dels quals es defineixen mesures de prevenció i protecció. Aquesta informació es trasllada als plans locals de protecció civil (DUP/OCIM).

LLEGENDA T = 10 anys T = 100 anys T = 500 anys
Font: Agència Catalana de l'Aigua

Figure 9: Educational materials developed by the project (exhibition and leaflets) 1/2



Figure 10: Educational materials developed by the project (magnets and posters) 2/2

Specific **training programmes and workshops** were delivered by the LOCAL4FLOOD on flood risk management, early warning systems, community awareness, and NbS implementation to a wide range of stakeholders, including administration staff, policy makers, local communities, private sector actors and research and academia staff.

The project partnership highlights the need **to shift from traditional grey infrastructure to green approaches** and advocate for the effective implementation of the Floods Directive (2007/60/EC), Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC), and Nature Restoration Regulation (2024/1991), particularly in the areas of public participation, ecological protection, and climate adaptation.



Conclusions

Enhancing Mediterranean multilevel governance for nature conservation

Aligned with the **EU NRR and the Post-2020 GBF**, and alongside other existing initiatives, the outcomes of the NHM community, coming from all around the Mediterranean, contribute to the global and regional commitments of Mediterranean countries. **These ten cross-cutting policy recommendations are** emerging from territorial solutions and a wide range of initiatives across the region that provide lessons and experiences to support EU Member States in defining their **National Restoration Plans** due for submission to the **European Commission by September 2026**. They will also inspire non-EU countries to adopt similar steps for ecosystem restoration. Moreover, significant opportunities exist to scale up ecosystem restoration in the region by connecting technical projects to regional flagship initiatives such as the **Mediterranean Forest Initiative roadmap**¹¹, addressing the urgent need to protect and restore Mediterranean forests but also the **MedWet regional initiative** which provides a platform in the Mediterranean to support countries in implementing their commitment under the **Ramsar Convention** to address wetland degradation and promote the **Wetland-based Solution Community of Practice** to support climate mitigation and adaptation¹².

¹¹

<https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/4c2e016e-e22d-40df-b8ed-304c6633a5d7/content>

¹² https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/cop14_18_20_rev1_dr_nbs_eba_e.pdf



Annex:

List of other relevant resources and initiatives

Carbon credits¹³ are defined as a tradable commodity representing one tonne of CO₂ equivalent emissions avoided or removed from the atmosphere, which can be generated through activities like avoided emissions or carbon sequestration projects. **Nature credits**¹⁴ (also known as biodiversity credits in policy discussions) are emerging economic instruments designed to finance measurable, positive biodiversity outcomes through conservation, restoration or protection activities, distinct from traditional offsetting and intended to reward actions that enhance ecosystem health. Both mechanisms aim to incentivise restoration by linking private finance to measurable, performance-based environmental results under defined standards and governance frameworks.

The European Commission Nature Credit Roadmap: The European Commission launched a 'Roadmap towards Nature Credits', to incentivise private investments into actions that protect and preserve nature, and reward those who undertake these actions and invest in them. The Roadmap adopted in June 2025 and developed with stakeholders sets out a bottom-up approach which will serve to contribute to closing the current ecological investment gap. Nature Credits will complement existing public funding for biodiversity as an additional and voluntary source of financing for nature-positive actions. The Roadmap aims to develop clear standards and reliable certification for these nature-positive actions to make nature credits effective and trustworthy, while avoiding administrative burden when joining such a scheme. It will also draw on already existing standards. Together with robust governance, this is key to avoiding greenwashing.

Geospatial tools and platforms support decision making for restoration planning and prioritization at different levels. The **FAO-FERM** powered by Earth Map is a comprehensive tool **that integrates spatial datasets for the environment such as satellite imagery, biodiversity, land cover land use, fire, and water.** This platform aggregates these datasets to provide information about the targeted area under restoration. The tool helps restoration practitioners to make informed decisions in the planning and monitoring phases of a restoration initiative about, for example, which species to reintroduce, where to focus restoration efforts, and how to replicate

¹³ <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecoser.2025.101724>

¹⁴ https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/scaling-up-biodiversity-positive-incentives_19b859ce-en/full-report/biodiversity-credits_79628cd2.html



or restore elsewhere based on similar characteristics. The FERM, serves as **the official monitoring platform for tracking global progress and disseminating good practices** for **the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration** and reporting areas under restoration towards **Target 2 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework**.

In Lebanon, **the Hima system**¹⁵ is a community-managed natural resources governance and conservation approach rooted in an ancient Arabic practice of allocating “Protected Areas” where local communities manage and utilize natural resources sustainably for biodiversity and socio-economic advantage. In a Lebanese context, the Hima system was re-emphasized at the national level through a partnership between the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL) and other stakeholders in support of local governments and their stakeholders in conserving biodiversity (including important bird and biodiversity areas), and managing water, grazing, and forest resources sustainably.

Interreg Euro-MED Academy: The Interreg Euro-MED Academy is a learning platform designed to turn project knowledge into long-lasting impact. Originally created in the previous programming period, the Academy has been reimagined to meet today’s challenges, with a renewed focus on the priorities of the 2021–2027 Programme. The vision is to build a shared space where the Mediterranean community can learn, connect, and act. By gathering the most valuable results from Euro-MED projects in its Results Library and offering high-quality training modules, the Academy ensures that innovative tools, methods, and practices are not only preserved but also transferred, reused, and scaled up.

ICZM/MSP integrated governance training frameworks: Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) are essential processes for better protection of marine ecosystems – by prioritising strategic use of marine areas and working together to reduce conflicts and improve planning at all levels of governance. **Planning tools developed by UNEP/MAP - PAP/RAC** provide practical guidance to preparing and implementing a plan based on MSP, also taking into account climate action, the ecosystem approach and land-sea interactions. The preparation and implementation of a plan resulting from MSP is described in the basic governance roadmap and can be easily adapted to very different national contexts and geographical areas.

¹⁵ <https://www.spnl.org/hima/>



MedPAN co-management experiences in Mediterranean MPAs: Co-management is a complex and dynamic process requiring a significant level of participation, and also depending on pre-requisites and conditions that challenge its implementation. A central point in most guidelines and MPA projects is the successful integration of local communities into planning and implementation of MPAs. In the Mediterranean, [a recent study by MedPAN](#) shows that only a small percentage of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) declare having a co-management system in place where stakeholders directly contribute to decision making.

Regions4 multi-level governance communities of practice: The Community of Practice – Regions4SDGs aims at accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, strengthening territorial approaches, as well as integrating regional processes, in contribution to the achievement of the global goals. This platform offers a collaborative experience, catalyzing the synergies among regions worldwide, and fostering policy coordination, collective implementation, monitoring, and follow-up. Its specific objectives are::

- Promoting the exchange of best practices, peer-review, and mutual support to overcome the challenges of the 2030 Agenda.
- Supporting the effective development of regional strategies aligned with the SDGs.
- Advocating for more ambitious results at the country-level while positioning regions as benchmarks to the United Nations system.

SMILO - Sustainable Island Certification process: The SMILO (Small Islands Organisation) Sustainable Island Certification Process is an international labeling programme designed to help small islands (less than 150 km²) achieve sustainable development. Key steps in the certification process include:

1. Setting up an Island Committee: The island forms a committee representing all stakeholders in the area who will oversee the certification journey. It is the permanent liaison body with the SMILO team.

2. Sustainable Island Declaration: The Declaration towards Sustainable Development of Small islands summarises the issues addressed by SMILO as well as the vision and goals the association intends to share with its members and partners. By signing this Declaration, the representative of the Island Committee first adheres to the philosophy of the programme and the SMILO network. It is also a way to formalise membership in the SMILO association. The Declaration also authorizes signatures by any other person or legal entity wishing to join the SMILO association.

3. Cooperation Agreement: The Cooperation Agreement is signed by the Island Committee representative when the island commits to the labelling process. This contract details all of the commitments made by the island, and the SMILO association, throughout this process.



This step corresponds to the island's official application to obtain the "Sustainable Island" label.

4. Diagnosis and Strategic Planning: The diagnosis and strategic planning are critical steps in the territorial process, both for setting up operations that will allow establishing sustainable practices that will lead to the certification of the island, and additionally in terms of leading to a shared assessment between the key players of the island Committee. The territorial approach must integrate the key players, human activities, and terrestrial and marine issues. Creating the island's diagnosis and the strategic plan allows to:

- make an objective and shared assessment of human practices and activities and island resource management
- measure the margins of progress to work towards a better balance between human development and island resource management.
- Set strategic objectives to achieve in order to obtain international recognition for the island – Sustainable Island Label.
- An instruction notice is available to help islands create their diagnosis and define their strategic plan. SMILO strategic principles have a guide structure for islands to determine their objectives.

5. Intermediary Assessment: Once an Island Committee establishes and the Sustainable Island Declaration and Cooperation Agreement are signed, the diagnosis and the strategic plan completed, and the intermediary assessment occurs. A rapporteur from the assessment committee oversees the completion of steps and develops the assessment. This assessment allows to:

- Recognise the efforts already made by the island (identified in the island diagnosis) with the possibility of obtaining sectoral prizes by theme if all the guidelines succeed.
- Certify that the island is actively in a labelling process

6. Operations Implementation/Island Funds: Islands implement operations that contribute to achieving priority objectives outlined in their strategic plan to improve sustainability. Once islands are eligible, they can have access to the Islands Fund to finance operations to achieve priority objectives.

7. Priority Objectives Achievement: When islands have reached all the priority objectives set in their strategic plan, they must list them in their label application.

8. Final Assessment: The final assessment is made on-site by one or two rapporteurs from the assessment committee, which checks that priority objectives have succeeded on the island. Later a collegial opinion by the whole assessment committee is proposed to the SMILO NGO Administration Council that officially issues the label. In case of a rejected label, recommendations allow the island to reapply.



9. Granting the Final Label: When islands get the “Sustainable Island” label, it is valid for five years. Every year, they must write an activity report which shows the efforts made on SMILO themes. Indeed, the SMILO approach is one of continuous improvement, so after five years to keep their label, islands will have to reapply by presenting their updated steps (Island Committee if changed, diagnosis and strategic plan, implementation of operations and priority objectives).

Water diplomacy or **Blue diplomacy** is an essential component in Mediterranean ecosystem restoration and resilience as Mediterranean rivers, aquifers, wetlands, and coastlines often extend beyond state and international boundaries and are now being threatened by climate change as well as competing interests. The Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) defines water diplomacy¹⁶ and explains multiple diplomatic tracks (Track 1, Track 1.5, Track 2, Track 3) as frameworks for managing transboundary water. Track 1, deals with state-led cooperation in international institutions; Track 1.5, owing to its multidisciplinary approach whereby international institutions as well as civil societies engage in facilitating dialogue; Track 2, an unofficial interaction at the grassroots as well as civil societal levels; and Track 3 referring to the society-level and institutional processes. All these interfaces prevent possible conflict as it aids in facilitating transboundary cooperation to underpin institutional conditions needed for restoring ecosystems.

List of contributors

Natural Heritage Mission Partners:

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- Doha Zamel (External Consultant)
- IUCN-Med
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- Region of Crete
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- CREAM
- National Technical University of Athens
- CoNISMA

¹⁶<https://waterknowledgehub.org/node/120/revisions/3652/view>



- French Biodiversity Agency (OFB)
- Association of Parks in Bulgaria
- National Institute of Biology of Slovenia

Associated Partners:

- MedPAN
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Thematic Projects

- ARTEMIS
- COASTRUST
- CARBON 4 SOIL QUALITY
- FRED
- GreenList4MPAs
- GermOfLife
- INCORE-MED
- LocAllForFlood
- MedSeaRise
- MIRAMAR
- MPA4Change
- FRED
- RENFORCE



- StrategyMedFor
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- Damour Municipality (Lebanon)
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- ACE (Lebanon)
- General Directorate of Forestry (Turkiye)
- We are here Venice (Italy)
- Minka-dev

ANNEX II

Policy recommendations and their potential implementation at different governance level



Category	Recommendation	National authorities	Regional authorities/Donors	Local authorities	Associated concepts and references
Integrated planning	1. Develop an integrated Source-to-Sea governance framework tailored to Mediterranean contexts, embedding multilevel governance and macroregional and transboundary coordination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Establish a unified multilevel governance framework within National Restoration Plans. -Legally embed Source-to-Sea coordination across water, land, marine, climate and agriculture ministries. -Mandate transboundary cooperation for shared watersheds and coastal systems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Facilitate macro-regional alignment across Mediterranean sub-basins. -Fund Source-to-Sea governance pilots, transboundary restoration corridors, and regional coordination mechanisms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Develop an integrated, Source-to-sea governance framework that links land, freshwater, delta, estuary, coast, nearshore and ocean ecosystems. -Embed multilevel governance, territorial solution, macroregional and transboundary coordination, and demographic factors, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), Source-to-Sea (S2S) Approach, (ICZM) Protocol /Barcelona Convention, Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), Target 2, Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD 2026–2035), SAPBIO (Strategic Action Programme for Biodiversity)
	2. Integrate restoration into science-based spatial planning to prioritize areas to be restored, monitor progress and coordinate knowledge to scale up nature-based solutions and bridge the science–policy gap.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Embed restoration priorities into national spatial plans and NRPs. -Align planning with climate scenarios, WFD requirements, biodiversity strategies, and land-use policies. - Adopt national indicators guiding restoration prioritisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Support harmonised spatial datasets and regional mapping tools. -Promote cross-border ecological connectivity and jointly defined priority zones. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Integrate ecological indicators in municipal spatial plans. -Co-design restoration actions with communities using participatory mapping and local knowledge. -Use local monitoring to refine restoration priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -EU Nature Restoration Regulation (NRR) , EU Water Framework Directive (WFD), Natura2000, UN SDGs 11, 13, 15
	3. Recognise the key role of wetlands and forests in increasing the resilience of the Mediterranean at the climate/biodiversity nexus, by fully integrating their biodiversity values and ecosystem services into land-use planning, agricultural policies and urban development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Integrate wetlands and forests as key ecosystems in national land-use, agriculture, climate, and biodiversity strategies. -Integrate ecosystem service valuation into national planning instruments, EIAs, SEAs, agricultural policies, climate adaptation plans, and disaster risk reduction strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Support regional coordination and knowledge exchange through MedWet, MedECC, SPAMI/SPA-RAC, and other Mediterranean networks to harmonise forest and wetland management across borders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use wetlands and forests as NbS for flood control, stormwater management, heat mitigation, wildfire prevention, and urban resilience planning. -Co-manage and monitor restored ecosystems with communities, civil society, and local stakeholders, ensuring ongoing stewardship and rapid response to degradation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MedWet initiative, Ramsar Convention, SAPBIO, wildfire resilience, hydrological services, StrategyMedFor's 11 Mediterranean indicators for sustainable forest management, Region4' Just resilience framework



Inclusive & participatory governance	4. Empower local communities by promoting co-management models that transform citizens from beneficiaries into active stewards, including the provision of local jobs and livelihood diversification opportunities.	-Create enabling legal frameworks for co-management and community stewardship. -Provide national funds and incentives (e.g., subsidies, VAT exemptions for restoration-related projects) to create green jobs and diversified livelihoods.	-Finance restoration projects and training programmes such as blue/green jobs and stewardship models.	-Co-create restoration priorities using participatory mapping and community dialogues involving all actors.	-UfM Grant scheme -UfM water and youth engagement strategy
	5. Promote inclusive, fair, and equitable participation across all stages of the restoration process, empowering underrepresented, vulnerable and peripheral communities and groups, ensuring an intergenerational perspective.	- Adopt national guidelines for inclusive participation and ensure equity and gender mainstreaming in policy implementation.	-Support and fund regional gender and inclusion frameworks, ensuring alignment across Mediterranean countries	-Implement inclusive engagement processes. -Capacitate underrepresented groups to participate meaningfully. -Work with schools, universities, and youth networks to promote intergenerational learning in restoration decisions.	-UfM CoP on Gender, Environment and Climate Change -Youth engagement frameworks -Loall4flood's workshops for schools
Innovation, financing & knowledge systems	6. Develop innovative financing and compliance mechanisms to ensure long-term sustainability of restoration efforts, engaging both public and private actors.	- Establish national regulations for PES, carbon markets, biodiversity credits, and ecological compensation. -Mainstream restoration financing into national climate, water, NRP, NDC, agriculture, and rural development strategies.	-Mobilise climate finance and connect countries to global green investment pipelines. - Capacity building to design restoration bankable projects	-Co-develop bankable restoration projects with SMEs, NGOs, and community groups. -Facilitate data collection for carbon credits, NbS valuation, and ecosystem services.	GCF, GEF, IFIs, development banks Blended finance, Private-public partnership EU Life programme, InvestEU
	7. Promote and advance appropriate user-friendly technologies, to advance restoration efforts, thereby improving prioritisation, decision-making, and resilience.	-Invest in national early-warning systems, remote sensing, and hydrological modelling. -Integrate user-friendly technologies and tools into national spatial planning and climate adaptation and resilience processes.	-Fund regional data platforms and shared repositories. -Facilitate transboundary access to climate and hydrological databases.	-Apply user-friendly monitoring tools (mobiles, apps). -Facilitate data collection.	Euro-Mediterranean Information System on know-how in the Water sector (EMWIS), MedWet, UNEP-GRID, FAO-FERM, FAO-Aquastat
	8. Encourage innovative and ambitious research	-Coordinate national research agendas and align	-Fund regional research networks	-Use research outputs to inform municipal	EU science-policy interface, Wetland4change and



	<p>and training agenda to foster interdisciplinary collaboration, knowledge co-creation, and support long-term monitoring, open source data and effective technology transfer.</p>	<p>them with NDC, NRP, climate and biodiversity strategies.</p>		<p>management.</p>	<p>locall4flood results for municipal planning and management.</p>
<p>Transboundary governance and peacebuilding</p>	<p>9. Preserve and restore natural resources to strengthen transboundary cooperation, build trust between groups, and reduce the risk of conflict over shared resources.</p>	<p>-Integrate conflict-prevention and peacebuilding approaches into land-use, water, and restoration policies.</p>	<p>-Fund transboundary basin cooperation and shared ecosystem restoration. -Create platforms for dialogues around shared and transboundary natural resources. -Promote regional mechanisms under the Barcelona Convention for cooperative governance.</p>	<p>-Support local data sharing, joint monitoring, and early-warning systems with neighbouring authorities in shared basins.</p>	<p>-Water diplomacy principles (track I and track II), Barcelona convention, North Western Sahara Aquifer System (Tunisia, Algeria, Libya), UN SDG 16, Barcelona Convention</p>
<p>(re)Building trust</p>	<p>10. Strengthen accountability and transparency in the policy processes in line with agreed conventions and legal frameworks by ensuring that decision-makers are accountable to their constituents.</p>	<p>-Reform outdated environmental laws and align with NRR, SAPBIO, ICZM Protocol, and Biodiversity Protocol and keep pace with evolving and emerging environmental challenges. - Apply Aarhus principles to ensure the public has access to environmental information</p>	<p>-Fund transparency, open-data, and public-access-to-information platforms related to environment, restoration, and climate action at national and local levels.</p>	<p>-Facilitate community access to information</p>	<p>Aarhus Convention principles</p>



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