

Press release

Call for urgent transformative actions for a nature positive Mediterranean

Brussels, 14 November 2022. More than 100 Mediterranean biodiversity actors gathered in Brussels from 2 to 4 November 2022 to promote the uptake of nature solutions to tackle the biodiversity and climate change crises in the region. After three years of action, the Interreg Mediterranean Biodiversity Protection Community (MBPC) project held its final event, hosted by the European Committee of the Regions and supported by the Murcia Region.

The MBPC presented [policy recommendations](#) to mobilise transformational change and reverse the catastrophic biodiversity loss and climate change impacts we are currently witnessing in the Mediterranean. *“The Mediterranean leading the way - A cooperative framework to strengthen area-based nature conservation actions”* interactive event provided an opportunity for networking and discussions among decision makers, local authorities, practitioners, researchers and organisations on how to integrate tested solutions into regional and sectoral agendas and align with EU present and future agendas (such as the Agenda 2030 or the EU Green Deal) and global sustainability targets.

The transfer, uptake and scaling up of the many solutions and tools developed by over 20 biodiversity protection projects co-funded by the EU through the Interreg Med and ENI CBC MED programmes, were the focus of these interactive conferences and workshops.

Nature-based Solutions across the Mediterranean region were highlighted as a cost-effective way to provide around one-third of the climate mitigation needed between now and 2030. Through protecting, effectively managing and restoring ecosystems, they are a powerful tool for climate change adaptation and mitigation in Mediterranean coastal communities and can increase socio-ecological resilience and overall well-being, with the engagement of communities and economic actors in their implementation.

The transboundary and regional approach to the governance of Mediterranean biodiversity in the South Adriatic Ionian Sea – Ecologically and Biologically Significant Area was discussed with the supportive role of regional organisations in the development of a transboundary governance framework and the operationalisation of political will into practical management. However, Khalil Attia, Director of UNEP-MAP SPA/RAC, cautioned *“regional organisations cannot replace Contracting Parties, they can only support them, Parties must implement their duties”*.

The panel of experts reiterated the importance of functional transboundary governance systems that can activate a variety of governance arrangements for bringing policy integration across countries or regions or for addressing interventions towards balancing food provision, reduced waste, accelerated climate mitigation and nature protection.

As with any interventions that require uptake and scaling up and for policies to be effectively implemented, there is a need for sufficient funding and finances. Joachim Maes, Policy analyst at the European Commission, DG Regional and Urban Development, highlighted the need *“to translate biodiversity conservation into economic languages”* and that we need to *“make conservation count”*

and be visible". Experts emphasised the urgent need to integrate biodiversity and climate agendas and provided insight on how we can move from simply valuing nature to actual on-the-ground financing for biodiversity conservation. Setting action-oriented priorities moving beyond 2022 and on how to mainstream biodiversity conservation into marine and maritime policies, were showcased in the frame of the Seas, Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas Intergroup (SEArICA) of the European Parliament session held on 4 November.

Laurent Markovic, Policy officer with EU DG Environment, underlined concrete actions regarding the Nature Restoration Law to ensure the long-term recovery of the EU's natural capital through the restoration of ecosystems. Regional authorities representatives, Adrian Zittelli Ferrari, Director-General for European Union Affairs for the Region of Murcia and Marino Spilotros, Project and Policy officer, TFI - Internationalization Task Force, ASSET - Regione Puglia, shared examples of territorial cooperation work promoting biodiversity conservation in their regions, together with MedCities Secretary General, Josep Canals who stressed the important role local authorities have in implementing these regional initiatives *"Through networking, municipalities can help raise awareness and share knowledge with civil societies about the importance of protecting biodiversity"*. Regional cooperation and institutional frameworks detailed how through their support, nature positive initiatives at all levels, local to regional, can be supported, and the ENSERES project pilot areas, Sfax and Tyre representatives, Mohamed Wajdi and Ali Badreddine, talked about the municipal benefits of taking part of this ENI CBC MED project.

The three-day event ended with an opportunity for participants to try out the many tools developed by the MBPC in a practical and interactive way, to promote the uptake and application of these tools in different settings.

However, an overall take home message is that we need to act now, and we need to act together across all levels, from high level institutions to local level ones and even as individuals. Further, all stakeholders and particularly non-nature actors, need to change the way in which nature is seen and valued if we are to change the trend of biodiversity loss and increase ecological and social resilience across the Mediterranean Basin.

Note to the editors – Quotes from speakers:

There were many inspirational thought-provoking messages from our speakers throughout the event, *"We still have time for decisive action, but time is running out, we need to act now and we need to act urgently"* Dania Abdul Malak, MBPC Coordinator, ETC-UMA.

"Everybody is talking about adaptation to climate change, but no one is talking about adaptation to biodiversity loss" Andras Krolopp, Senior Policy Adviser, The Nature Conservancy.

"Solo we are faster, together we go further, we are one Med" Ali Badreddine, Project Manager - TCNR -Marine Protected Area of Tyre Coast Nature Reserve.

More information:

[Mediterranean Biodiversity Protection Community website](#)

[Photo gallery](#)

[Speakers booklet](#)

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