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3rd Mission for Natural Heritage Institutional Dialogue

Bridging practice and policy for
mediterranean environmental governance

Venue: Ateneu Barcelonès, carrer de la Canuda, 6, 08001, Barcelona.

Organisers:

- **Organising Partner:** MedCities
- **Supporting Partners:** IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, Plan Bleu, Marine Institute, Region of Crete, Region of Sardinia, Ministry of Spatial Planning and Urbanism from Montenegro, CREAM
- **Framework:** Dialogue4Nature Project (Interreg Euro-MED Programme). Under the [Mission for Natural Heritage](#), Dialogue4Nature project acts as a platform to upscale best practices and knowledge to Mediterranean and EU policy levels, engaging with decision-makers and authorities at the science-policy interface.

Introduction:

The 30th anniversary of the Barcelona Process (1995–2025) and the 50th anniversary of the Barcelona Convention (1976–2026) provide a timely opportunity to reflect on past achievements and redefine future cooperation. The recent adoption of the EU Nature Restoration Regulation (2024) further underscores the urgency of restoring degraded ecosystems, setting binding targets for member states, and fostering transnational collaboration.

The Natural Heritage Mission of the Interreg Euro-MED Programme is a key platform for protecting, restoring, and valorizing the Mediterranean's natural resources. Through its governance projects and thematic communities, the Mission supports the upscaling of knowledge, policy integration, and the transfer of innovative solutions across the region.



DRAFT AGENDA - November 25

Safeguarding and restoring the Mediterranean: from Local Action to Regional Policy

09:30 -10:00 Welcoming and Registration

10:00 - 10:30 Institutional Opening

- Ms. Clare Hart, MedCities Acting President, Vice-President Montpellier Métropole
 - Mr. Manuel Szapiro, Head of Representation European Commission
 - Ms. Anna Estella Viñeta, Deputy Director of Environmental Education, Nature and Society, Government of Catalonia
 - Mr. Christoph Maier, Project Officer, Interreg Euro-MED Joint Secretariat
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10:30 - 12:45 Advancing Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation for Transformative Environmental Governance

Thirty years after the launch of the [Barcelona Process](#), initiated in 1995 to promote Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, the European Commission is renewing and launching a new strategy that affects its relation with the Mediterranean basin, such as the Oceans Pact and the Pact for the Mediterranean. These pacts will be their main political instrument to deepen strategic cooperation with its partners in the southern and eastern Mediterranean.

The UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) and [the Barcelona Convention and its seven protocols](#) (Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean) celebrated their 50th anniversary this year. This milestone coincided with the revision of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD), as well as some of the Convention's protocols and regional plans. In the framework of the 2024-2025 Programme of Work, Plan Bleu was tasked by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention with supporting this MSSD review process. The review was coordinated by the UNEP/MAP Coordination Unit and Plan Bleu.

The Convention constitutes the principal regional legally binding Multilateral Environmental Agreement in the Mediterranean at basin level.

This political momentum is an important opportunity for the region to make significant steps towards environmental stewardship and sustainable development.

In this session, we will explore the opportunities and limitations of these new Pacts and renewed frameworks in terms of nature protection, restoration and valorisation in the Mediterranean context as to their implications for or contribution from multilevel stakeholders and the Mission Natural Heritage Community.

The Pacts: Ocean's Pact, Pact for the Mediterranean (20 min)

- DG MARE (Speaker TBC)
- Ms. Justine Belaïd, Policy Officer, DG MENA

Their embedment in and upscaling by regional governance frameworks (30 min)

- Ms. Alessandra Sensi, Head of Environment, Green and Blue Economy, Union for the Mediterranean
- Plan Bleu (Speaker TBC)

Multilevel governance implications and opportunities (50 min)

- Views from the countries:
 - Ms. Sihem Filali, Director General of the Environmental Governance Unit at the Ministry for Environment of Tunisia
 - Ms. Sanela Metjahic, Senior Adviser, Directorate for International Cooperation and EU Funds of the Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development of Montenegro
- View from the regions:
 - Mr. Matteo Muntoni, General Director of the Environmental Protection Department, Autonomous Region of Sardinia, Italy
 - Mr. Xavier Bernard Sants, Secretary General of the Euroregion Pyrenees Mediterranean
- The local perspective:
 - Ms. Jelka Tepšić, Counselor to the Mayor, City of Dubrovnik
 - Ms. Marie Pelatan, Head of Projects, International Relations and Large Projects Direction, Mission Méditerranée, Ville de Marseille

The voice of the Mission Natural Heritage Community of practice (35 min)

Questions by the TPs and participants

12:45 - 14:15 Lunch Break

14:15 - 15:45 Nature Restoration Plans: Policy Territorial Solutions to Global Challenges

In June 2024 the Council of the EU approved the Nature Restoration Regulation setting binding targets to restore degraded ecosystems, particularly those with the most potential to capture and store carbon and to prevent and reduce the impact of natural disasters. Each Member State will develop a national restoration plan, in synergies with other policies and key actors, setting out restoration needs and measures to fulfil the target obligations adapted to the national context and taking into account the diversity of different regions. This regulation has opened new opportunities for the NHM partners, which have become key stakeholders for public administration in order to work towards the fulfilment of this regulation.

This roundtable will present and discuss the progress, approaches, and challenges in developing and implementing the Nature Restoration Plans at different administrative levels. It will also showcase concrete examples of tools, methods, or practices from NHM projects that can effectively contribute to the implementation of the NRPs.

Keynote (10 min)

- IUCN EU Representative Office (Speaker TBC)

Institutional roundtable (40 min)

- Views from the countries:
 - Mr. Manuel Oñorbe Esparraguera, Head of Service of the Sub-Directorate General for Terrestrial and Marine Biodiversity (Spain)
 - Mr. Aurélien Carré, Coordinator of the Terrestrial and Marine Ecosystem Restoration Unit at the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle (France)
- Views from the regions:
 - Mr. Guillaume Huget, Région Sud (France) - TBC
- The local perspective:
 - Barcelona Metropolitan Area (Spain) - Speaker TBC

Solutions from the Natural Heritage Community projects (30 min)

- Ms. Flaminia Squitieri, COASTRUST project
- Ms. Maria Soria, LocAll4Flood project
- Mr. Giancarlo Gusmaroli, WEGOCOOP project
- Mr. Christoph Schröder, Wetland4Change project

Questions by the TPs and participants (10 min)

15:45 - 16:00 Barcelona Process and UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention Anniversaries Celebration and Closing Remarks

- Ms. Alessandra Sensi, Head of Environment, Green and Blue Economy, Union for the Mediterranean
- Plan Bleu - Speaker TBC
- Ms. Carolina Pérez, Head of Policy, MedCities

Followed by a toast and cocktail aperitif