

ROADMAP FOR THE WESTMED INITIATIVE

A/ The aim of the WestMED initiative

The WestMED initiative was developed with the aim of building bridges between Southern Europe and North Africa and strengthening relations between partner countries in the Western Mediterranean. The initiative strives to build on existing economic and social successes whilst recognizing the importance of innovation and the development of new sustainable concepts in the sub-region. WestMED partners are committed to good governance principles and more effective exploration of opportunities in the region to develop the “Blue Economy”¹ in a sustainable manner. The initiative aspires to consolidate collaboration and fraternal relationships between WestMED partners in the years to come in an effort to generate blue growth, blue job opportunities and a better standard of living for the Mediterranean people whilst ensuring the protection of the Mediterranean seas from pollutants and unregulated human activities.

A strategy at sub-sea basin level requires taking into account existing governance arrangements, as well as active cooperation frameworks. Indeed, there are several such arrangements across the Mediterranean region, specifically in the Western Mediterranean, with different geographical political and thematic scopes.²

The initiative is based on over two decades of work within the Western Mediterranean Forum, commonly referred to as the 5+5 Dialogue, where the same 10 countries participating in the WestMED initiative have agreed to pursue joint action aiming at building capacities and developing skills on the blue economy and to set up instruments for networking for available funding mechanisms.

The WestMED initiative relies on a collective effort on the part of the participating countries, with the support of the European Commission and the contribution of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Secretariat and observers of the WestMED Steering Committee in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Committee.

The Barcelona Convention, adopted in 1975, is one of the oldest regional seas conventions under the umbrella of UN Environment. With a primary focus on the marine environment, this Convention was the first official integrated governance initiative in the Mediterranean, augmented by its Protocols. Cooperation on specific thematic issues (e.g. fisheries) was

¹ Ministerial Declaration on Blue Economy, Union for the Mediterranean, 2015, http://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/2015-11-17-declaration-on-blue-economy_en.pdf

² WestMED non paper based on the context analysis (18 May 2016)

already in place, for example within the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, launched under the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 1949.

As a result, the initiative benefits among others from:³

- Regional dialogue on maritime policy and the blue economy under the umbrella of the UfM;
- Cooperation in fisheries management, recently strengthened by the Catania process launched by the European Commission in 2016, and the MedFish4Ever Declaration signed in 2017, as well as the strategies of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean on fishing and aquaculture (Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea ; Regional Plan of Action to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture).

Pour Bluemed Voir Axe 1

- Cooperation within the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean, and efforts towards the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development which is consistent with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- Work by the Intermediterranean Commission of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR IMC) and its efforts to highlight important political messages supporting territorial cooperation (e.g. in the Patras Declaration), as well as the work accomplished in the framework of the Bologna Charter for the adaptation of coastal zones to climate change.

Last but not least, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the European Territorial Cooperation programmes within the European Structural and Investment Funds play a fundamental role in supporting cooperation channels and mechanisms across the Mediterranean region. In particular, the European Territorial Cooperation programme for the Mediterranean (the Interreg MED Programme), together with its counterpart the European Neighbourhood Instrument for Cross-Border Cooperation in the Mediterranean (ENI CBC Med), have actively supported cooperation projects for a long time. It is crucial for the initiative's five EU members to ensure that existing funding mechanisms align with the priorities and future actions identified by the WestMED member countries, as well as to continue to champion the importance of regional cooperation in the Western Mediterranean in negotiations for the next programming period 2021-2027.

The ten Western Mediterranean countries approved the system of governance and management for the implementation of the WestMED initiative for sustainable development of the blue economy in the Western Mediterranean at the informal ministerial meeting held on 30 November 2017 in Naples (Italy). They expressed their willingness to work together on concrete actions linked to the three main goals of the initiative: enhancing safety and security;

³ Communication from the European Commission on WestMED, COM(2017) 183

promoting sustainable growth of the blue economy and job creation; and conserving ecosystems and biodiversity.

As stated in the European Commission's communication and in the Naples declaration, although the initiative focuses on the Western Mediterranean region, its scope of action — and potential benefits — could easily extend beyond this region. Depending on the needs to be addressed and as appropriate, actions will remain open also to partners from other countries in the broader region subject to prior approval by the WestMED initiative members.

B/ Way forward

The Western Mediterranean has considerable assets in terms of the blue economy, for instance, the dynamism of maritime transport, tourism, fishing and aquaculture; the development of renewable energies; the exploration of new natural resources; and the biotechnological development of existing resources. However, it remains affected by significant economic disparities and high rates of unemployment, especially among young people. The Western Mediterranean is also subject to numerous and growing pressures (e.g. strong urbanization of coastal areas, rapid demographic growth, coastal erosion, overexploitation of fish stocks, pollution, coastal hazards, etc.), aggravated by the effects of climate change. The balance between opportunities for the blue economy and sustainability of the implementation of shared strategies in the Western Mediterranean needs a strong, place-based, transnational and cross-disciplinary effort towards a science-based knowledge-transfer process. In addition, synergies in terms of taking action and coordinating efforts are key elements in this process.

The objective of this document is to identify priorities for action in order to provide the Steering Committee and, under its guidance, the Assistance Mechanism, with clear guidelines on the future activities within the WestMED Initiative and possible contributions for the next calls for proposals to be launched by the European Commission.

To build such a roadmap, the projects associated to the priorities for action identified by each participating country in line with the initiative's Framework for Action (FA)⁴ have been consolidated in the annexed tables. Participating countries agreed to a short- and medium-term approach to properly prioritize common actions to be developed into concrete common projects.

As such, the ten participating countries consider that:

- Some actions listed in the Framework for Action are already underway or about to be developed (see Axis 1);
- An additional number of concrete actions (based on common priorities as identified in Axis 2) integrating those not included in Axis 1 will be considered by the Steering Committee, following an assessment of all ongoing initiatives relating to the Western

⁴ Commission Staff Working Document, Framework For Action (SWD(2017)130)

Mediterranean region to be carried out by the Assistance Mechanism by the beginning of 2019. The Steering Committee's work will focus on creating networks, if necessary, among the relevant actors in the participating countries concerned, as well as supporting project leaders in the design and setting up—including fundraising—of projects;

- The Steering Committee will re-evaluate the actions led with the support of the Assistance Mechanism before June 2019.

Axis I – Actions underway or about to be developed in line with WestMED's general objective of blue growth

The complementarity of ongoing work with respect to initiatives launched by the European Commission or in each of the 10 countries will be systematically sought.

Research and innovation issues in the Mediterranean are covered, among others, by the BLUEMED initiative, with which synergies will be actively developed. From BLUEMED's point of view, "Synergies and complementarities among all the involved stakeholders will maximize existing and future opportunities and the use of the most appropriate instruments, thus structuring cooperation for advancing the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for Blue Growth in the Euro-Mediterranean Region. The BLUEMED Initiative supports and facilitates cooperation and coordination not only among EU Member States but among all the Mediterranean countries, in order to promote the alignment of programmes and pooling of resources and investments to address the challenges identified in the BLUEMED Strategic Agenda. Coordination with two relevant initiatives targeting the Mediterranean basin at sub-regional level, namely the WestMED – Towards a Sustainable Blue Economy Initiative for the Western Mediterranean, and the EUSAIR – European Strategy for Adriatic-Ionian Region, will enhance the efficiency of the actions, the investments in marine and maritime research, innovation and technology and will reduce fragmentation and duplication of efforts. At the same time, connection with the Regional Smart Specialization Strategies will enhance the Blue Growth perspective in the coastal/maritime and insular regions/countries."

Similarly, and despite a different geographical scope, the work of InterregMED through the two PANORAMED project thematic groups (Maritime Surveillance and Maritime Tourism) could be considered. In addition, maritime spatial planning in the Western Mediterranean basin is addressed at different levels (e.g. projects led by the International Oceanographic Commission - UNESCO, the SIMWESTMED project, and other calls for projects by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund). Synergies and efficient experience and information exchange at all levels must be systematically sought in order to increase the level of coordination and complementarity between these institutions and projects, building together a shared and coherent Western Mediterranean strategy.

Moreover, in a wider perspective both in terms of number of sectors and dimension of the cooperation area (with thirteen participating countries), the Programme ENI CBC Mediterranean region (ENI CBC MED) includes, among its cross-cutting priorities, the institutional capacity building. For this reason, the ENI CBC MED could positively contribute to foster the WestMED cooperation strategy by sharing its experience deriving from the

results achieved by the projects funded within the previous programming period and those to be funded within the 2014-2020 Programming period

Furthermore the strategic projects of the Interreg MED and ENI CBC MED Programmes could be a concrete way of contributing to capacity-building in Southern Mediterranean countries, particularly through participation in workshops, high-level conferences, events, networking activities, etc. financed within the framework of the abovementioned projects. An assessment of initiatives in the sub-sea basin was completed in 2016 as part of preparations for the Commission's WestMED Communication. An update of the latest developments, to be carried out by the Assistance Mechanism and presented to the Steering Committee by mid-2019, is needed to identify possible and concrete actions to integrate, if necessary, missing actions in an updated version of this document.

Axis II – Common priorities for action to be developed in the framework of the WestMED initiative

After examination and analysis of the actions suggested by the initiative's member countries, six priorities for action common to most countries emerged. These actions aim to support the development of the blue economy in the Western Mediterranean in the short, medium and long term by building on the real added value of this sub-regional cooperation framework and existing or potential funding opportunities.

1. Maritime cluster development
2. Biodiversity and marine habitat conservation and restoration
3. Sustainable consumption and production
4. The development of coastal communities and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture
5. Skills development and circulation
6. Maritime safety and the fight against marine pollution

An indicative list of existing or ongoing projects and initiatives linked to these priorities for action has been drawn up as a tool for the future activity of the Steering Committee and is attached as a working document to this Roadmap.

1. Maritime cluster development⁵

Regional clusters are appropriate platforms for the development of innovative solutions in the field of the blue economy. They can foster and promote collaboration, as well as the sharing

⁵ Priority 2.2 of the WestMED Framework for Action

of knowledge, experience and good practices, for effective networking among WestMED partners. Specific sectors can be targeted depending on the priorities and interests of respective partners: eco-sustainable marinas, “smart” ports, sustainable offshore energy, multi-use platforms, etc. for the further exploration and exploitation of resources and related areas.

The organization of networks of ports and clusters including incubators and accelerators will also be sought to promote this concept in Southern countries.⁶

WestMED added value (to be updated with the support of the Assistance Mechanism):

The creation of a WestMED network of ports and clusters of marine and maritime activities implementing a blue economy strategy (circular economy, waste management, environmental management plan, sustainable fisheries and aquaculture), the creation of a network of maritime administrations for the exchange of information, data, knowledge, experience, expertise and good practices, as well as the promotion of marine and maritime activities will be an opportunity to boost the visibility of maritime clusters and commence a long-term collaboration and sustainable networking, while developing new WestMED projects. Economic opportunities and solutions to mitigate undesirable problematic situations at the regional level will be explored, building on existing projects such as the “Port Tech Clusters” and “Clean Ports” certifications.

Actions will be promoted to favour incubators and connect start-ups, investors, accelerators, entrepreneurs, corporate networks, universities for increasing innovative blue ecosystems.

Existing or ongoing projects and initiatives linked to maritime clusters open to participation by WestMED countries: See Table 1

2. Biodiversity and marine habitat conservation and restoration⁷

Pollution at sea and the pollution of water, soil and air are important vectors of marine habitat degradation and **biodiversity loss**, modifying ecosystem structure and functioning and consequently leading to the decline of the **region’s fauna and flora**. **Member countries will be supported in their efforts to meet international commitments, such as those under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols and regional action plans.**

In this respect, member States have identified the following relevant actions: **the fight against pollution at sea** (green transport, improvement of ballast water management, marine litter, opportunity to create an Emission Control Area), **land-based pollution, the protection of coastal and marine ecosystems** (integrated management of waste and liquid discharges, creation of marine and coastal protected areas, awareness campaigns, improvement of environmental crisis management mechanisms), and **the fight against coastal erosion and habitat degradation** (project impact assessments, vulnerability assessments and

⁶ Already mapped EBN centres are available at: <https://ebn.eu/?p=membersmap>

⁷ Priority 3.3 of the WestMED Framework for Action

rehabilitation engineering), in order to achieve the good ecological status of the marine environment in the Mediterranean and improve coastal areas' resilience to climate change.

WestMED added value (to be updated with the support of the Assistance Mechanism):

WestMED will allow for enhanced collaboration between countries of the region closely linked geographically and ecologically, providing a strategic and member-country based contribution to the efforts engaged across the Mediterranean for the development of concrete projects and actions for biodiversity and marine ecosystems conservation, thus contributing to the implementation of the Barcelona Convention (UNEP/MAP) and the Bologna Charter, especially in the fields of plastic pollution and the development of a marine protected area networks.

Existing or ongoing projects and initiatives: See Table 2

3. **Sustainable consumption and production**⁸

In order to conserve and sustainably use marine resources, the promotion of a multi-level, integrated and regional approach to sustainable consumption and production practices is needed, through the use of shared resources for sustainable economic development and the creation of new opportunities in the fields of **sustainable coastal and maritime tourism and cultural heritage - blue tourism** (eco-sustainable marinas, synergies with others sectors, including fisheries and aquaculture, cultural heritage, environmental protection, new land and coastal routes, water management), **innovation** and **support for entrepreneurship** (marine renewable energy and energy transition, small projects and micro-enterprises in the blue economy, and marine bio-technologies). Port and logistics infrastructures are also crucial for the safe, efficient and sustainable development of maritime transport and logistics in the Mediterranean region, with a focus on fostering intermodality and connectivity among key ports in the region (development of green transport and clean fuels as LNG, green shipping, facilities and services, safer maritime transport).

Effective maritime spatial planning in the Mediterranean and coastal zone management shall promote sustainable, not conflicting and, where possible, synergic uses of sea space and resources.

WestMED added value (to be updated with the support of the Assistance Mechanism):

WestMED will give a strategic focus to new projects and a framework for the replication or extension of existing projects with the support of national experts and the Assistance Mechanism, with a view to supporting research and innovation and creating synergies with BLUEMED and other relevant initiatives through ownership, the promotion of actions, and the securing of funding for new WestMED projects related to sustainable consumption and production practices.

Existing or ongoing projects and initiatives: See Table 3

⁸ Priority 2.4 of the WestMED Framework for Action

4. The development of coastal communities and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture⁹

Given the decline in fish stocks and the desire to ensure responsible, rational and sustainable fisheries with a view to supporting the socio-economic development of coastal communities, the joint work will focus in particular on the fields of **sustainable aquaculture development** through optimal strategies, technologies and practices (e.g. pilot farms, certification, technological innovation and impact measurement); **environmentally friendly fishing practices and fleets** (e.g. prevention of marine pollution, discharges, establishment of a blue biodiversity belt, spatially-based measures for sustainable fisheries, promotion and adaptation of fishing ships to marine waste collection, promotion of new technologies to equip small-scale fisheries with effective solutions for communication, navigation and conservation of catch on board); **upgrading of the entire production chain**, from capture to processing and distribution (e.g. training, development of common practices and standards, fair incomes for fishermen, upgrading of fishing ports).

WestMED added value (to be updated with the support of the Assistance Mechanism):

WestMED will develop regional projects for the certification of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture on a Mediterranean scale, projects to develop innovative technologies in fisheries and aquaculture that respect the environment, and projects that benefit coastal communities by safeguarding and creating long-term jobs while improving socio-economic conditions.

Existing or ongoing projects and initiatives: See Table 4

5. Skills development and circulation¹⁰

In order to promote and popularize the new concept of the blue economy, and enhance countries' skills and expertise in this field, it is necessary to promote and facilitate skills circulation between the countries of the region, through training, exchanges, awareness-raising and research activities aimed at society, on maritime and marine environmental issues specifically and the blue economy more generally. Examples include:

- The creation of an Ocean Knowledge and Innovation Community at the European Institute of Technology and support for actions to enhance ocean knowledge;
- The creation of a network of blue schools and awareness campaigns to develop entrepreneurship by young people and youth initiatives at sea, including through the organization of hackathons based on company needs and programmes;
- The completion of a study to identify the blue economy's needs in terms of skills and qualifications exploiting available assessments;

⁹ Priority 3.4 of the WestMED Framework for Action

¹⁰ Priority 2.3 of the WestMED Framework for Action

2. *Roadmap for the WestMed initiative*

- The programming of training cycles for young civil servants in the blue economy field;
- The establishment of a business incubator in the blue economy field;
- The promotion and encouragement of e-learning between countries in the region;
- The creation of networks of marine and maritime training institutes and research centres and access to and sharing of scientific information on the marine environment;
- The promotion and encouragement of the integrated development of skills in connection with control, surveillance and operations at sea in various maritime fields, including fisheries, the fight against maritime pollution, and safety.

WestMED added value (to be updated with the support of the Assistance Mechanism):

WestMED will develop and support joint actions on research and innovation, allow for the sharing of educational material and programmes at the Mediterranean scale, and create synergies with the BLUEMED initiative in particular, through the ownership and promotion of actions such as capacity-building, the training of trainers, and the sharing of experience, expertise and good practices, including with operations at sea.

Existing or ongoing projects and initiatives: See Table 5

6. Maritime safety and the fight against marine pollution¹¹

Safety at sea and the fight against marine pollution are increasingly important issues due to growing anthropogenic pressure on the sea, including underwater noise and other sources of energy, the growing number of extreme climate events and geological hazards, and hazards associated with the exploration and exploitation of marine resources and the seabed (marine hazards, flooding of coastal zones, etc.). Concerted governance of the sea should be encouraged in order to improve transport systems for smart, greener and safer mobility, as well as to promote studies on major hazards (marine submersion, oil spills, coastal erosion, micro-tsunamis, storms, biological invasions and toxic invasions in particular, etc.). The initiative will support the launch of new WestMED projects in the field of marine pollution prevention and control, as well as the development of monitoring and warning networks in the region.

WestMED added value (to be updated with the support of the Assistance Mechanism):

WestMED will strengthen governance in maritime surveillance, taking into account proposals by PANORAMED and work by the Mediterranean Coast Guard Functions Forum (MCGFF) for enhanced collective maritime safety and security. It will collaborate with the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC) to fight pollution, taking into account HNS protocols in the framework of the West MOPoCo project and sub-regional cooperation agreements.

Existing or ongoing projects and initiatives: See Table 6

¹¹ Priority 1.2 of the WestMED Framework for Action