



Mediterranean Information Office for
Environment, Culture and Sustainable
Development (MIO-ECSDE)

Summary of the MIO-ECSDE Policy Paper on:

THE MEDITERRANEAN'S WIND ENERGY TRANSITION: TOWARDS A CONSENSUS BUILDING TO ACHIEVE BOTH CLIMATE NEUTRALITY AND BIODIVERSITY OBJECTIVES

Curbing climate change and reversing biodiversity decline are two of the greatest challenges modern societies face, and both are closely linked to the future energy system scenarios. The Mediterranean basin's semi-enclosed nature, temperate climate, exceptional variety of natural ecosystems and landscapes, as well as its unparalleled cultural heritage, make it a place where the effects of the climatic and biodiversity crises are already important and visible.

The Mediterranean region is known for its significantly high potential for renewable energy production and the development of such projects, albeit with considerable differences between the northern and the southern shores. Wind energy is one of the most developed renewable energy types. Yet it is also controversial, regarding its impact on biodiversity and the landscape. Mediterranean countries are moving towards deploying more wind farms of bigger scale to decarbonize their economies by 2040. At the same time, to meet another obligation and fulfill the 30% coverage target of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, their conservation actions are expected to claim larger tracts of land and ocean.

Fast-tracking of renewable energy projects with little or no nature protection aspects and engagement of the local community in the planning and implementation, is only too common, with a rising number of renewable energy installations sited in and around vulnerable natural and cultural heritage sites. What is more, the EuroMediterranean area is facing a complex cluster of multiple energy /power/geostrategic crises, with high uncertainty in which direction the energy transition from gas will take us.

Consequently, the “*green vs green*” dilemma, i.e., on the one hand maintaining biodiversity, or restoring it, and achieving climate goals on the other, poses considerable challenges. It is undeniable that it is imperative that fossil fuels are replaced; however, this transition should be both socially just and not detrimental to habitats and their capacity to act as important carbon sinks, mitigate climate change and effectively support biodiversity.

Read the full Policy Paper here: <https://bit.ly/3AD5VUI>

In its policy paper **MIO-ECSDE** frames how the Mediterranean's transition to wind energy can be addressed wisely and in a participatory way, at minimum cost to biodiversity conservation, in pursuit of finding the maximum consensus for sustainable solutions.

The following **key recommendations** should be taken into consideration in our collective efforts to preserve what we have while trying to prevent further damage:

Key Recommendations

1. Create clear exclusion zones. Precise and early planning is key in guiding wind energy investments to protect ecologically sensible areas. To facilitate permitting procedures for wind energy projects without harming protected ecosystems and biodiversity, clear “windfarm-free” zones need to be established by the relevant national permitting authorities.

Location is key to ensure low cost to biodiversity conservation

2. Minimize risks to vulnerable taxa during wind project operation. New mitigation approaches and technological innovations offer opportunities to minimize collision risks and light/noise pollution while operating wind projects. More research, testing and standardized approaches by the wind industry are needed to advance technical tools and methods in order to reduce impacts of already existing wind farms.

Research gaps remain, both across technology types and species groups

3. Increase wind turbine material sustainability. Enhancement of the circular economy approach and principles in the sector is needed for efficient recycling systems and material security for mineral resources as well as strategic planning to avoid impacts on local biodiversity.

Mining required to build future renewable energy infrastructure carries additional ecological impact

4. Establish meaningful and early consultation processes with local communities. Stakeholder engagement processes, albeit difficult, can guide a developer in identifying biodiversity risks, provide the opportunity for concerns to be raised and local knowledge to be shared. Local communities should retain a fair share of the added value generated by the investment.

Inclusive and participatory governance for sustainable energy development should be further reinforced

5. Foster alignment of climate change and biodiversity policies. Policies that simultaneously address synergies between mitigating biodiversity loss and climate change, while also considering their societal impacts, offer the opportunity to maximize co-benefits and help achieve the needed transformational change of the economy and society.

Biodiversity protection concerns and measures should be reflected in all Mediterranean renewable energy policies, strategies and development plans to ensure cross-sectoral integration



Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE)

Who we are

We are a non-profit Federation of 133 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working in the fields of environment and development in 28 countries of the Euro-Mediterranean area.

Our mission

To protect the natural environment and cultural heritage and promote Sustainable Development in a peaceful Mediterranean by bringing together the efforts of NGOs, governments, international organisations, other socio-economic partners and networks.

What we do

We act as a technical and political platform furthering synergies and strengthening public participation on resources and waste, nature and biodiversity, cultural diversity, climate change, health and environment as well as on horizontal and cross-cutting issues.

A network of networks

We facilitate the work of four other networks of major Mediterranean stakeholders:

- **MEdIES**, the Mediterranean Education Initiative for Environment and Sustainability
- **COMPSUD**, the Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians for Sustainable Development
- **COMJESD**, the Circle of Mediterranean Journalists for Environment and Sustainable Development
- **MedUnNet**, the Mediterranean Universities Network for Education for Sustainable Development

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