



Report of Activities

2023

January-December

Protecting our Natural Environment and
Cultural Heritage and promoting Sustainable
Development for a peaceful Mediterranean.

www.mio-ecsde.org

**Mediterranean Information Office for Environment,
Culture and Sustainable Development**



Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development

12 Kyrristou 10556 Athens, Greece

Tel: +30 210 3247267, 3247490, Fax: +30 210 3317127

E-mail: info@mio-ecsde.org

Website: www.mio-ecsde.org

This Report of Activities for the period January-December 2023 was prepared collectively by the MIO-ECSDE Staff, reviewed by the Chairperson, approved by the Executive Bureau and the 2023 Annual General Assembly.

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1. Institutional Developments of MIO-ECSDE

1.1. Executive Bureau

The MIO-ECSDE Executive Bureau (EB) was structured as follows in 2023 following the 27th AGM in December 2022:

Chair: Prof. Michael Scoullos (Elliniki Etairia)

Co-Chair: Prof. Mohammed Ftouhi (Morocco)

Members:

- Ms Anaïs Berthier (EEB via ClientEarth)
- Ms Ghada Ahmadein (RAED)
- Mr. Panayotis Pafilis and Mr. Thomas Doxiadis (Elliniki Etairia)
- Mr. Vjerran Pircic (Croatia)
- Ms Antonia Theodosiou (Cyprus)
- Mr. Jean-Valère Jeronimi and Ms Celine Labbe (France)
- Mr. Michael Scoullos & Mr. Giorgos Sampson (Greece)
- Ms Romina Bicocchi & Ms Patrizia Bonelli (Italy)
- Mr. Ziyad Alawneh (Jordan)
- Ms Marie Therese Seif (Lebanon)
- Mr. Vincent Attard (Malta) / Treasurer
- Mr. Mohamed Ftouhi (Morocco)
- Mr. Imad Attrash (Palestine)
- Mr. Mario Alves (Portugal)
- Mr. Milan Vogrin (Slovenia)
- Mr. Jeremie Fosse & Mr. Angel Juarez (Spain)
- Ms Suheir Raies (Syria)
- Mr. Habib Ben Boubaker (Tunisia)
- Ms Burcu Genc (Turkey) who was eventually replaced by Mehmet Botan Kayhan

1.2. The 28th AGM

The 28th Annual General Assembly of MIO-ECSDE took place virtually on the 14th of December. The membership unanimously approved the draft Report of Activities for 2023, the Audited Financial Report for 2022, the estimated financial report for 2023 and proposed work programme and provisional budget for 2024. Members also shared their highlights and key concerns. BEAM of the Environment Association from Lebanon was unanimously approved as a new full member of MIO-ECSDE. MIO-ECSDE membership numbers 134 NGOs from 28 countries in December 2023.

1.3. MIO-ECSDE Secretariat

In the first part of 2023 the status of the Secretariat's staff remained unchanged and as described in the 2022 Report of Activities. In August 2023, Junior ESD Officer Eftyxia Korkidis moved on to new endeavours.

1.4. Quality management, financial auditing, accountability standards

▶ MIO-ECSDE successfully underwent in October the annual audit (first of a new three-year cycle) for complying with the **ISO 9001:2015** standards in the design, development, management and implementation of international and European projects on environment and sustainable development. The review, which covered all relevant institutional and operational issues, was done by *Swiss Approval Certification Services*. To support MIO-ECSDE staff, an external consultant was contracted, to conduct internal audits, review the current procedures and suggest updates and adjustments, etc.

▶ The 2022 Financial Report was audited (positive results) in June-July 2023 by *PKF Euroauditing SA*. The softone financial management software (including accounting component) is constantly adapted and updated to better address the daily functioning of the MIO-ECSDE Secretariat as well as for its hosted institute GWP-Med (e.g. it is now uploaded on the cloud and not server-based).

▶ As **full member of “Accountable Now”**, MIO-ECSDE participated in the Working Group (WG) on reviewing and updating the reporting process. The discussions of the WG rolled from September 2022 till April 2023 and resulted in a new approach to Accountability reporting which ensures that the reporting process is global and timely, in a way that delivers comparable data in plain language. The new reporting process is a triennial cycle where in year 1, a core report is to be submitted along with an Action Plan that lays out the roadmap for accountability improvements of the organization and in years 2 and 3, action reports on the action plan of year 1 are to be submitted. In 2023, MIO-ECSDE volunteered to report against the new framework and communicate its experience with the Secretariat of Accountable Now. All MIO-ECSDE’s accountability report and feedback from the Independent Review Panel, along with MIO-ECSDE’s Code of Conduct, all of its Policies, annual Reports of Activities and Financial Statements, are uploaded on the “[Our Accountability](#)” section of the webpage.

▶ MIO-ECSDE continues hosting GWP-Med based on an agreement with the Global Water Partnership (Stockholm). All involved parties agree to continue this important for the region institutional relationship.

2. Continuation and enhancement of activities related to networking

2.1. Networking with the MIO-ECSDE Members and its wider NGO Network

2.1.1. Exchange and dissemination of information

The dissemination of information was facilitated by:

(i) The MIO-ECSDE e-News

Three issues of the MIO-ECSDE e-news covering the November 2022-December 2023 highlights (English and French) were prepared and sent out to Member Organisations and the wider MIO-ECSDE database (see Issue#117, Issue#118 and Issue#119), <http://mio-ecsde.org/news/mio-ecsde-e-news/>).

(ii) The 'Sustainable Mediterranean' journal

During 2023, no new issue of *Sustainable Mediterranean* was developed.

(ii) The MIO-ECSDE webpage and social media

The MIO-ECSDE website (<http://www.mio-ecsde.org>) was regularly updated and populated. In addition, MIO-ECSDE Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube media were updated.

(iii) The MEDIES' webpage and e-bulletin

The MEDIES website www.medies.net was regularly updated with ESD news, publications, announcements, etc. of Euro-Mediterranean interest (on average 2-3 posts per week). The social media (fb) page of MEDIES was also regularly fed (on average 1 post per week).

The information bulletin of MEDIES was also circulated on a quarterly basis to its members (<https://medies.net/category/resources/e-bulletins/>).

2.1.2. Surveying the Membership

In November 2022, the Secretariat had sent a short survey to its member organisations and COMPSUD members, among other stakeholders, to grasp their insights, feedback and reactions regarding the development of a Policy Toolkit on waste management in the Mediterranean, within the framework of the Med4Waste project in which MIO-ECSDE is a partner. The survey was open till January 2023 and valuable input was received in terms of what elements this Toolkit should have in order to meet real needs, be useful and effective, and therefore likely to be applied, and facilitate the advocacy and related activities of the MIO-ECSDE member organisations.

In May 2023, the member organisations of MIO-ECSDE and COMPSUD members were asked to provide their views and comments on a mapping of policies and challenges on waste management for the Med4Waste project partner countries: Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Spain and Tunisia. The mapping work focused on reviewing recent municipal waste and circular economy policies and strategies, while also providing the context of each country (in a non-exhaustive way) and its main findings were included in project deliverables, including the Policy Toolkit (<https://shorturl.at/jU9X3>).

2.1.3. Showcasing actions of the Membership

The Secretariat informs its members of various regional developments, events (webinars and on-line meetings) and opportunities. The dedicated section of the MIO-ECSDE website with the news of the Membership was updated with materials they share with the Secretariat. There is also a dedicated section in the MIO-ECSDE e-News. The MEdIES website also communicated relevant Membership initiatives.

2.2. MIO-ECSDE as facilitator of Mediterranean Networks

The MIO-ECSDE Secretariat facilitates the following networks:

- ▶ **The network of Parliamentarians and other Politicians for Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean (COMPSUD):** COMPSUD maintains close relations with the Chairman of the UfM Parliamentary Assembly's (PA-UfM) Committee on Energy, Environment, and Water, as well as with the 2nd Standing Committee on Economic, Social and Environmental Cooperation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM).

COMPSUD was invited to take part in a meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM) Energy, Environment and Water Committee, in Aveiro, Portugal, on 6 March 2023, at the University of Aveiro, on the theme "Facing climate change in the Mediterranean Region". This meeting was attended by parliamentarians from PA-UfM member countries and Prof. Scoullou, Secretary General of COMPSUD, was a speaker in the panel on "Addressing climate change in the Mediterranean region".

In June 2023 COMPSUD participated in the 20th Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD) (Marseille) where its contribution to the implementation of the MSSD Flagship Initiatives it has undertaken, were presented.

Under the Water and Environment Support (WES) project, COMPSUD is well advancing its priority of promoting the Aarhus Convention in the whole of the Mediterranean (see details under sections 3.2 and 5).

- ▶ **The network of Mediterranean Educators working on Environment and Sustainability (MEdIES):** See section 4.

- ▶ **Mediterranean Universities Network for Education for Sustainable Development (MedUnNet):** The MEdIES Secretariat continued to keep up-to-date its members about ESD developments in the higher education sector, and especially regarding SDG4.7, while the members were involved in the dissemination of calls for participation in major ESD trainings/events, the 2023 Asterousia Hybrid University, etc. Since the Chairman has coordinated the drafting of the "Sustainability Charter of the Greek Universities", its approval by the Synod of Rectors of the Greek Universities, and currently its promotion, an effort is in the pipeline to mobilize through MedUnNet similar charters/guidelines in other interested countries of the region and beyond.

- ▶ **The network of Mediterranean Journalists and Communication Professionals working on Environmental issues (COMJESD):** Members of the network were regularly informed about major developments. More specific work on strengthening the network did not materialise in 2023.

- ▶ **Other networks:** MIO-ECSDE kept the **Act4Drin Alliance** informed on developments related to the Drin Corda process. The **DeFishGear Network, a network for a litter free Adriatic and Ionian coast and sea**, was also facilitated by MIO-ECSDE throughout 2023.

3. MIO-ECSDE as a promoter of common NGO policies and the collective voice of Mediterranean environmental NGOs

3.1. Monitoring of and contribution to the formulation of policies relevant to the Mediterranean region and involvement in important Mediterranean processes

3.1.1. Collaboration and representation in the work of UNEP/MAP and MCSD

MIO-ECSDE has kept close contacts with the Athens-based coordinating unit of UNEP/MAP. The Federation has been invited to attend and contribute in meetings of UNEP/MAP, its RACs (Regional Activity Centres) and of the Mediterranean Commission of Sustainable Development (MCSD).

In March 2023, MIO-ECSDE provided input to the 2022-2023 joint work plan of the Regional Cooperation Platform on Marine Litter in the Mediterranean. The latter, was presented at the 6th meeting of the Platform that took place face-to-face on the 26th of April 2023. MIO-ECSDE's contribution provided an overview of its wide-ranging marine litter related activities addressing the entire management cycle of marine litter. The work plan consists of measures clustered around five themes aiming to contribute to the implementation of measures in the Updated Marine Litter Regional Plan.

In March 2023, MIO-ECSDE submitted beach macrolitter datasets for 12 beaches to the UNEP/MAP Secretariat through the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR), to be considered in the marine litter assessment for the 2023 MED Quality Status Report (QSR).

On the 24th of May 2023, MIO-ECSDE actively participated in the Meeting of the MED POL Focal Points. It addressed various topics, including the new/updated IMAAP Assessment Criteria for nutrients, contaminants, and marine litter, measures related to the assessment findings of the 2023 MED QSR for pollution and marine litter, the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA), and more. MIO-ECSDE took the floor on several occasions to express its appreciation for the work done, as well as to provide comments on the proposed methodological approach for establishing a threshold value for seafloor macrolitter.

The Chairman of MIO-ECSDE Prof. Michael Scoullou, participated in the 20th Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD) that took place in Marseille (14-16 June 2023).

On the 27th of June 2023, MIO-ECSDE actively participated in the Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Marine Litter Monitoring (CORMON Marine Litter). The meeting deliberations focused on the findings of the 2023 MED QSR and on setting Baseline Values (BVs) and Threshold Values (TVs) for floating microlitter and seafloor macrolitter. MIO-ECSDE made a

particularly important contribution in reaching a consensus on the methodological approach to be used for determining the seafloor litter TV. MIO-ECSDE supported the adoption of the same methodological approach that was used to calculate the TV for beach macrolitter, instead of the 'no deterioration/no increase' approach advocated by a few Mediterranean countries. As a result, the agreed TV for seafloor macrolitter is 38 items/km², and it was presented for adoption at the coordination meeting on EcAp.

Under the WES project, together with LDK consultants who are leading the project, MIO-ECSDE supported UNEP/MAP with the organisation of a regional meeting for developing the preliminary elements of new NAPs (National Action Plans) and sharing Best Practices for the application of the Guidelines for Estimating Pollution Loads from Agriculture and Aquaculture Sectors, that took place on 24 and 25 October 2023 in Athens, Greece.

At COP23 of the Barcelona Convention (Portoroz, Slovenia, 5-8 December 2023), the Chairman of MIO-ECSDE was a panellist of the Ministerial Session “Green transition in the Mediterranean: From decisions into actions” (December 7), during which he explained how the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem (WEFE) Nexus approach can help in bringing down the silos in governmental action, recognizing natural continuums and “turning knots of competing uses of natural resources into points of convergence”. In this way the nexus can serve the green transition we all want to see in the Mediterranean.

MIO-ECSDE coordinated its member organisations AOYE, CIDCE, DPPVN, ECO-UNION, EKO-KVARNER, MAREVIVO, MEDASSET, MOHAMMED VI FOUNDATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, RAED, and other MAP Partners (ACG, AREBI, GWP-Med) that attended COP23 and prepared a joint statement which was read to the Ministers in plenary, during the Ministerial segment of the COP. Read the joint statement [here](#).

In addition, MIO-ECSDE co-organized two side events at COP23:

(a) "Navigating Change: Progress and Prospects in the Battle Against Plastic Pollution in the Mediterranean" on December 5, 2023. You can read more on this side event [here](#).

(b) "Education and Youth: The Process and Stakeholders in Securing a Sustainable Future for the Mediterranean Region" on December 8, 2023. This side event submitted by MIO-ECSDE on behalf of the Mediterranean Committee on Education for Sustainable Development (MCESD) which successfully co-organised it together with the Republic of Slovenia (the event was also supported financially by the Pedagogical Institute of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth of Cyprus). The side event, with more than 60 participants, States and Civil Society representatives as well as Youth Associations representatives – such as the Arab Office for Youth and Environment, the UNECE Youth Platform, the Sava Youth Parliament – provided the opportunity to share, discuss and provide insights on how to solidify and upscale good practices at national and regional levels of youth empowerment and engagement in and through ESD, and further explore resisting challenges at the institutional and operational levels. You can read more about it [here](#).

3.1.2. Securing the Mediterranean dimension in international policies and processes

3.1.2.1. EU Policy

Some specific EU policy areas in focus were:

- ▶ The EU Green Deal
- ▶ The EU Zero Pollution Action Plan
- ▶ The EU Restoration Law

- ▶ European Neighbourhood Policy and the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)
- ▶ 2030GreenerMed Agenda of the UfM (the EU is Co-President along with Jordan)
- ▶ European Marine Framework Strategy Directive (MSFD) and Ocean Literacy
- ▶ Climate Change
- ▶ Biodiversity (Natura 2000, MPAs, the LIFE Programme, etc.)
- ▶ Resource efficiency and Waste
- ▶ Sustainable Development
- ▶ Education for Sustainable Development
- ▶ Access to environmental information, participation, justice
- ▶ Air/Odour pollution and Chemicals

Some of the EU consultations and joint statements that MIO-ECSDE contributed to in 2023 were:

- ▶ **EC Consultation on Horizon Europe programme:** MIO-ECSDE took part in a survey related to the evaluation of the European Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation. The consultation survey was commissioned by the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation to assess the relevance, effectiveness, coherence, efficiency and EU value-added of the Horizon Europe programme. The findings from this study will feed into the mid-term evaluation of Horizon Europe and will inform the European Parliament and the Council about the achievement of the programme's objectives.
- ▶ **Joint statement on the EU Nature Restoration Law:** The EU Nature Restoration Regulation is the unique opportunity of this decade to change the pathway from continuous deterioration to regeneration, where we steer towards a safe and resilient future of living in harmony with nature. Restoring nature means restoring our greatest ally in tackling the climate crisis and its severe impact, restoring our own health and wellbeing, and restoring our livelihoods and economies. In March 2023, MIO-ECSDE together with 206 civil society organisations, called upon all EU Member States, Members of the European Parliament and the European Commission to urgently adopt a strong Nature Restoration Law that is fit for purpose to tackle the twin biodiversity and climate crises. Find the joint statement [here](#). After the EU Commission, Council and Parliament adopted their own position on the Nature Restoration Law (NRL) by July 2023, the Trilogue phase of the legislative procedure began. During the Trilogue, the 3 institutions responsible for the file started to negotiate the final version of the law, which will then be voted on and eventually become reality. In September 2023, the aforementioned statement was revised to include specific requests for this phase of the law negotiation process and was subsequently reissued by the signatory civil society organizations.
- ▶ **Civil society manifesto: nature-inclusive, people-centred renewables:** With this Manifesto, 50 signatory civil society organisations, among them MIO-ECSDE, propose a comprehensive and forward-thinking approach to accelerate renewable energy development in harmony with our ecosystems and communities. The document was published in October 2023 and presents five key courses of actions that can ensure a successful acceleration of renewable energy and aims to urge decision-makers across Europe, and beyond, to commit to these priorities: (1) make renewable energy an ally of biodiversity, (2) include citizens in decision-making, (3) prepare administrations to fast-track renewables, (4) foster community energy and profit-sharing and (5) make the transition resource-efficient. Find the Manifesto [here](#)

3.1.2.2. Following up progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Principle 10 of the Rio Convention and the Aarhus Convention), etc.

As in previous years, during 2023, MIO-ECSDE took into consideration in all its thematic priorities and activities the outcomes and recommendations of major global fora that are follow-up actions of the Rio process or linked with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

More specifically for Principle 10 of the Rio Convention and the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention), MIO-ECSDE and COMPSUD, in close collaboration with the Secretariat of the UNECE Aarhus Convention, drafted the first version of **the Mediterranean Accession Agenda to the Aarhus Convention** (<https://shorturl.at/9i8j5>). It took note of a milestone meeting that took place on the 8th and 9th of March 2023, that MIO-ECSDE co-organised within the EU funded WES project, that launched a Peer-to-Peer exchange that will last for at least one year, in order to support Mediterranean States that are interested in acceding to the Aarhus Convention, to be able to do so in a smooth and effective manner. This joint event was a major step in the long-standing collective efforts to promote the Aarhus Convention in the whole of the Mediterranean. A regional in-person training followed on 14-15 November 2023 where the WES “Mediterranean Accession Agenda” was presented and discussed as a guide and to facilitate the process. (see 3.2.3 for more details)

3.1.2.3. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the various political frameworks

The Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (MSESD) and its Action Plan towards 2030: Following its adoption in the special High-Level Event within the 9th Environment for Europe (9Efe) Ministerial Conference in Cyprus (October 2022), the Secretariat and the Chairman continue to promote it and keep informed the educational community of the Euro-Mediterranean region at various related occasions (conferences and events) and through its communication channels (newsletters, posts, website, etc.). The Mediterranean Committee on ESD and the Republic of Slovenia co-organised the Side Event: "Youth Perceptions: Education and youth: The process and actors to secure a sustainable future for the Mediterranean region" on December 8th, in the framework of the 23rd Meeting of the Contacting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (Portoroz, Slovenia, 5-8 December 2023). Read more under 3.1.1.

The UNECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development: MIO-ECSDE participates officially in the Bureau of the UNECE ESD Steering Committee having the status of Observer NGO Member (since October 2020) while the Chairman had a leading role in the Ad Hoc group on Strategic Planning 2030 of the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD (adopted at the Efe9 Conference in 2022).

Prof. Michael Scoullas actively participated on 25-26 May 2023 in the 18th Meeting of the UNECE ESD Steering Committee in Geneva, where, among other advances, he presented the recent activities organized in the framework of the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (MSESD).

UNESCO ESD-Net 2030: MIO-ECSDE, through MEDIES, is part of the UNESCO Global Network “ESD-Net 2030”, that is the follow-up Initiative of the Global Action Programme on ESD (GAP) (since 2022). The network acts as a diverse and inclusive platform comprised of competent Strategic Partners - from countries, IGOs, NGOs/CSOs, Academia, Youth, etc. in order to advance ESD Policy, boost knowledge sharing and collaboration schemes, enhance advocacy, monitoring and evaluation on ESD. Currently, it organises a series of webinars on ESD pedagogies in consultation with its members.

The **Greening Education Partnership (GEP):** MEDIES recently joined this global partnership led by UNESCO for which the ‘ESD-Net 2030’ will provide the platform to exchange experiences and showcase

good practices on the aforementioned areas. GEP was launched in 2022 in the context of ESDfor2030 aiming at “getting every learner climate-ready”. It is structured around 4 key pillars of transformative education: Greening schools; Greening curricula; Greening teacher training and education systems’ capacities; and, Greening communities.

ESD National Strategy in Lebanon: In October 2023, the MIO-ECSDE member and Strategic Partner, the Makhzoumi Foundation, that together with other Lebanese stakeholders undertook the drafting of the National Strategy on ESD for Lebanon, approached MIO-ECSDE to seek advice and lessons learned from the experience of other countries. The recent MSES Action Plan towards 2030 was used as a reference in their work, while contacts with other Ministries from the region were set. The Lebanese ESD Strategy was finalised and a series of initiatives have started within the country’s Greening Education Project ([Read more](#)).

3.1.2.4. Active participation in the Euro-Mediterranean policy area: Union for the Mediterranean and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) processes

The MIO-ECSDE Secretariat has continued its close relationship with the relevant to the Mediterranean Unit(s) of DG ENV, CLIMA, MARE, NEAR while following up on the European Neighbourhood Policy and its financial instrument (ENI). The Secretariat has also continued to closely monitor the developments of the UfM and maintained its close relationship with its Secretariat.

Through the WES and Med4Waste projects as well as the Innovative Sustainable Economy Mission of the Interreg Euro-MED Programme, MIO-ECSDE directly supports the UfM Secretariat in the implementation of the 2030GreenerMed Agenda and its monitoring process.

MIO-ECSDE has engaged in multiple exchanges with the UfM within the framework of the UfM labelled Plastic Busters Initiative and the ongoing Plastic Busters CAP child project implemented also in southern Mediterranean countries. MIO-ECSDE has invited the UfM to participate in various Plastic Busters CAP events, such as national trainings in Matruh (March 2023) and Aqaba (March 2023), a project steering committee meeting in Barcelona (May 2023), a project policy workshop in Tunis (September 2023) and the project final hybrid conference in Aqaba and Siena (November 2023). The latter in fact was organized under the auspices of the UfM. Furthermore, in collaboration with all Plastic Busters CAP partners, a marine litter masterclass was co-organized at the UfM premises.

MIO-ECSDE actively participated at the 4th meeting of the UfM Working Group on Environment and Climate Change in Sitges (Spain) on the 24th of May 2023. Taking stock of the advances in the implementation of the 2021 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Action by way of the 2030GreenerMed Agenda (in combination with its 2021 Baseline Assessment) and the Climate Action Work Plan was at the core of the meeting, as were exchanges on key ongoing regional efforts, country needs and priorities, the 2023 calendar of activities and next steps forward. MIO-ECSDE contributed to the session on GreenerMed-associated activities. Ms Anastasia Roniotes, Head Officer of MIO-ECSDE presented the Med4Waste (ENI CBC MED funded project on waste management in which MIO-ECSDE is a key partner) effort to capitalize on lessons learned in organic waste management in the Mediterranean. Prof. Michael Scoullou, MIO-ECSDE Chair announced the new WES Call for Champions of Plastic Pollution Prevention in the Mediterranean to encourage voluntary actions and motivate advancement and commitment in combating pollution by plastics. Updates on all of the above and even more took place during the 7th UfM Environment Task Force that took place in Brussels on 15-16 November. The Chairperson himself participated and apart from the latest developments on ESD in the Mediterranean, the Med Aarhus Accession Agenda and the results of the WES Call for Champions of Plastic Pollution Prevention in the Mediterranean, he also presented the progress thus

far on the Roadmap for preparing a Strategic Framework Document on Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus in the Mediterranean source to sea continuum that was agreed at the 1st Roundtable on WEFE Nexus in the Mediterranean (6-7 June 2023, Rabat).

3.1.3. MIO-ECSDE activities as partner of GWP-Med

MIO-ECSDE acts as Host Institute of the GWP-Med Secretariat and continues its fruitful collaboration with it. As a member of the GWP-Med network, apart from the WEFE Nexus advocacy work, MIO-ECSDE promoted during 2023 the following, which are integral to both the GWP-Med and MIO-ECSDE agendas:

- ▶ Submissions of joint/coordinated project proposals;
- ▶ Facilitation of the Circle of the Parliamentarians (COMPSUD), facilitation of the Circle of Media/Journalists (COMJESD);
- ▶ Collaboration with MEdIES for its water education activities (e.g. “Zero Drop” Programme);
- ▶ The ongoing HYDRIA virtual museum of water management techniques of the past;
- ▶ The Drin Corda (Coordinated Action for a Sustainable Future).

3.2. (Co-) Organisation of meetings at Mediterranean or sub-regional level

3.2.1 Plastic Busters CAP e-course on marine litter monitoring and mitigation

The ENI CBC Plastic Busters CAP e-course on marine litter monitoring and mitigation took place on the 17th and 19th of January 2023. The e-course brought together 256 participants and was organized by MIO-ECSDE and UNISI with the support of the EU funded “Water and Environment Support (WES) in the ENI Neighbourhood South Region” project. The e-course sought to create the enabling conditions for a societal shift towards the wise use and sustainable disposal of plastics. The e-course received unprecedented attention from all over the world; some 390 marine litter practitioners registered to attend, coming from almost all EuroMediterranean countries as well as from Argentina, Australia, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, China, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, India, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Somalia, South Korea, Sudan, Sri Lanka, United States of America, Yemen. On the 17th of January 2023, the e-course focused on monitoring approaches to assess the presence and effects on marine litter; all state-of-the-art monitoring methodologies were featured, while the Plastic Busters threefold monitoring approach aiming to assess the impact of marine litter on biota was put in the spotlight. On 19th of January 2023, presentations were dedicated to the operationalization of marine litter prevention and mitigation actions and participants had the opportunity to exchange know-how with marine litter practitioners that have actually put in motion measures addressing both sea-based and land-based sources of marine litter and also learned about the most common marine litter related myths and misconceptions. Read more at <https://shorturl.at/fkBM5>

3.2.2 Phase B of the 2022 Hybrid University

Phase B of the [2022 Hybrid University](#), took place from 9 January to 5 February 2023 combining self-paced (asynchronous) learning and live “meet-the-experts” e-sessions focusing on “Ocean Literacy in Biosphere Reserves”. The course capitalized on a combination of the outcomes of Phase A (that took place in Asterousia and Cyprus in the Autumn of 2022) the content of previous e-courses, as well as on the online material prepared by UNESCO IOC on Ocean literacy. The e-course offered to its 92 active learners (from 37 countries) the opportunity to exchange knowledge, skills and approaches about

Ocean Literacy and on how marine and coastal Biosphere Reserves can act as living labs for developing ocean literacy with their visitors, local youth etc. Read more on Phase B [here](#)

3.2.3 Promoting effective environmental information and participation in the Mediterranean

Within the EU funded “Water and Environment Support (WES) in the ENI Neighbourhood South Region” project, MIO-ECSDE co-organised a 2-day on-line meeting on the 8th and 9th of March 2023 that launched a Peer-to-Peer (P2P) exchange that will last for at least one year, in order to support Mediterranean States that are interested in acceding to the Aarhus Convention, to be able to do so in a smooth and effective manner. This joint event with the UNECE Aarhus Convention Secretariat, the Secretariat of the UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention, the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean, the Energy, Environment and Water Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM), the Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians for Sustainable Development (COMPSUD) and the Mediterranean Programme for International Environmental Law and Negotiation (MEPIELAN Centre), was a major milestone in the long-standing collective efforts to promote the Aarhus Convention in the whole of the Mediterranean.

Numerous Multilateral Environmental Conventions and National Legislation are important for the protection of the Environment and their successful implementation greatly relies on evidence-based easily accessible information, effective public participation and access of all interested stakeholders to justice. These three essential components are furthered by the Aarhus Convention. Currently, 12 Mediterranean countries and the European Union are already Parties to the Aarhus Convention. By securing effective access to information and to justice, as well as engagement of the public, accession to the Convention, will facilitate the design and implementation of green economy programmes, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its Sustainable Development Goals, the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) of the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system, the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development, the Union for the Mediterranean’s 2030 GreenerMed Agenda, the compliance with, and enforcement of, the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols and a series of national strategies and policies. Being a Party to the Convention significantly contributes to countries’ efforts to promote citizen-centric environmental governance and environmentally sound policies.

The participation of some 37 Peers from Ministries of Environment, Foreign Affairs, Justice, as well as the active participation of NGOs, indicates that the countries of the region are genuinely interested in understanding better the benefits, opportunities and challenges linked with the accession to the Aarhus Convention. So, the meeting and P2P process is riding on this momentum that has been a long time in the making and its timing is right.

In their closing remarks, Ms Ella Behlyarova, Secretary to the UNECE’s Aarhus Convention, reiterated the Secretariat’s willingness to provide advisory assistance in law development and practical implementation of the Convention, as well as support participation of interested countries’ representatives in the Convention’s meetings so as to facilitate accession processes, and Prof. Michael Scoullou presented the next steps in the P2P process and expressed his optimism that by the end of the 1-year WES activity, Mediterranean countries will be closer to acceding to the Aarhus Convention.

A first ever Regional Training dedicated to the Promotion of the Aarhus Convention in the whole of the Mediterranean was co-organized by WES and the UNECE Aarhus Convention Secretariat, in Athens, Greece, on the 14th and 15th of November 2023. The main purpose of this 2-day regional training, that is part of the ongoing WES P2P process, was to strengthen the implementation capacity of public authorities, country experts, NGOs and other stakeholders on the main pillars of the Aarhus

Convention: access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to Justice, as well as on the application of the principles of the Aarhus Convention in international decision-making. The 18 appointed high-ranking Peers from Ministries of Environment, Water, Foreign Affairs, Justice, etc. that came to Athens were very engaged in the discussions that followed the presentations and interactive exercises on the provisions of the Convention, its principles and practical implementation. Diverse experiences of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention were also shared and discussed. (more information can be accessed here: <https://bit.ly/3sMO0Jx>).

A second and final version of the Mediterranean Accession Agenda to the Aarhus Convention (MAAAC) was agreed and disseminated in November 2023 (it can be accessed here: <https://bit.ly/4b1p2X5>).

3.2.4. The Plastic Busters CAP policy workshop for integrating marine litter into local and national planning

In an effort to combat marine litter and promote sustainable coastal management, the Plastic Busters CAP project organised a workshop for integrating marine litter into local and national planning. The event took place on 20 September 2023 in Tunis and was organized by the National Institute of Marine Sciences and Technologies of Tunisia (INSTM), in partnership with MIO-ECSDE and the University of Siena (UNISI). The technical workshop brought together over 40 influential stakeholders, including policy-makers, decision-makers, advisors representing various governance levels, as well as representatives from environmental NGOs and research institutes. Its primary objective was to foster collaboration and enhance the science-policy-society interface. At the heart of this workshop was a pivotal goal: to identify recommendations for a marine litter management approach that combines Ecosystem-Based Management (EbM) with Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM). Read more at: <https://shorturl.at/lsvT7>

3.2.5. Med4Waste and WES solidify efforts for informed decision-making on organic waste management in the Mediterranean

From the 24th to the 26th of October 2023, more than 200 on-site and on-line participants from 23 countries of the Mediterranean region and beyond, followed an important event that took place in Cagliari, Sardinia, to exchange know-how, experiences and lessons-learned regarding organic waste management gained by two major EU-funded projects: Med4Waste and Water and Environment Support (WES) in the ENI Neighbourhood South Region. MIO-ECSDE is a key partner in both projects, which support the implementation of the UfM's 2030GreenerMed Agenda, while the event also constituted the Final Capitalisation meeting of the Med4Waste project.

The event was very successful in fostering a collaborative environment, vibrant exchanges and the showcasing of good practices to achieve sustainable and applicable in the region organic waste management systems. Read more at: <https://shorturl.at/efuD0>

3.2.6. The Plastic Busters CAP final hybrid conference

The final hybrid conference of Plastic Busters CAP, held on November 8th, 2023, in Aqaba, Jordan, as well as concurrently at the University of Siena in Italy, and online, represented a significant milestone in the ongoing fight against marine litter in the Mediterranean. This event provided a wealth of knowledge, expertise, and invaluable lessons derived from the extensive efforts of the project. The conference was jointly organized by the University of Jordan-Aqaba, the University of Siena, and MIO-ECSDE, in collaboration with the EU-funded "Water and Environment Support (WES) in the ENI Neighbourhood South Region" project, under the auspices of the Union for the Mediterranean.

3.2.7. Asterousia Hybrid University 2023 – Phase A

Building on the series of Summer Universities organised since 2014, this year’s Hybrid University of Asterousia focusing on “Water Management in Biosphere Reserves of the Mediterranean and beyond”, was held in two phases:

- PHASE A (on-site) took place from 18 to 24 September 2023 in the Asterousia Biosphere Reserve in Crete. Following an international call (July 2023) and the selection process (August 2023), a total of 26 individuals from 10 countries took part (13 international plus 13 Greeks, including local participants). Throughout the week-long event, some state-of-the-art integrated approaches of water management were presented, without neglecting the cultural aspects of water. The key-note lectures and certain presentations of PHASE A were video recorded and will be used in the upcoming PHASE B. [Read more on PHASE A, and browse the highlights video.](#)

- PHASE B (online) is scheduled to take place during January – February 2024 as a three-week-long course to provide learning opportunities to a wider international audience (approx. 100 participants expected), in the form of asynchronous and synchronous sessions. The 2023 edition of the Asterousia University is held thanks to the kind contribution from the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe (Venice Office), the Region of Crete and the Heraklion Development Agency.

3.3. Mediterranean Actions/Campaigns

3.3.1. Water in the Mediterranean

Regarding the ongoing MIO-ECSDE water agenda, the Secretariat did the following this year:

- ▶ Continued to be part of and monitor the Core and Expert Working Groups of the framework of the Drin Dialogue Process and the implementation of the Shared Vision for the Management of the “Extended” Drin River Basin.
- ▶ Continued to promote, in cooperation with GWP-Med various older and newer educational materials such as “Water in the Mediterranean” (available in seven languages); the “Alter Aqua” material for Malta, the “Other water” for Cyprus, the online app on non-conventional water resources (www.ncwr-edu.net), the various editions of the “Gift of Rain” (all resources are available [here](#)).
- ▶ In 2023, in collaboration with GWP-Med, a wealth of education and awareness activities have been organised in [Cyprus](#) and in Greece ([Schimatari area and Crete](#)) within the “zero drop” campaign, engaging overall some 600 school students. Moreover, an appealing [new educational material \(floor game\)](#) has been designed in Greek and English and re-produced to cover the needs of many schools of Heraklion city (Crete) and Schimatari. The Secretariat is looking into the possibility of translating and producing the floor game into other languages (French and Arabic) and delivering trainings on how to apply it.
- ▶ The HYDRIA virtual museum is a founding member of the World Network of Water Museums (WAMU-NET) (www.watermuseums.net). The MIO-ECSDE Chairperson is on the Board of the WAMU-NET. From January to April MIO-ECSDE/MEDIES collaborated closely with the Museums Network to organize and promote the fourth edition (2023) of the successful School Contest entitled: “The Water We Want - from heritage to future”. The annual contest invites students from all around the world aged 6 to 18 years old to express their ideas about the links between water heritage and the SDG challenges through artworks (drawings, photos, soundscapes, videos). MEDIES disseminates widely the call and contest’s toolkit to its members and channels and assists schools and NGOs to submit their works. The Chairman, at the UN Water Conference in New York (March 2023) attended the inauguration of The Walk of Water, an exhibition exploring past, present and

future uses of water, where Hydria was also included ([The Water We Want \(walkofwater.org\)](https://www.walkofwater.org)). The 2024 edition of the contest opened in early November. In addition, since February 2023 MIO-ECSDE/MEdIES collaborates with WAMUNET within the Credit (Creative Digital Waters) Project aiming to increase access to, and awareness of, European citizens, and particularly the youth, on the precious water heritage, through innovative digital tools (see Section 4).

3.3.2. Biodiversity, Protected Areas, Climate Change, etc. in the Mediterranean

In 2023 the following actions were undertaken:

- ▶ MIO-ECSDE, the UNESCO Chair & Network on Sustainable Development Management and Education in the Mediterranean of the University of Athens, and the Greek National Committee of MAB/UNESCO together with the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe, Venice (Italy) have a long-standing fruitful collaboration in projects and initiatives on topics relating to management as well as education within designated areas and especially Biosphere Reserves in the Mediterranean.
- ▶ MIO-ECSDE successfully ran the one-year-long project entitled “Monitoring marine litter and generating fit-for-purpose data through a participatory science approach in Asterousia Biosphere Reserve”. The project, funded by UNESCO and the abrdrn Charitable Foundation, entails actions focused on improving the marine litter knowledge base and evidence in the Biosphere Asterousia Reserve, strengthening its management plan with tailored-made marine litter prevention and mitigation measures and innovative solutions, educating and engaging local communities (in particular youth) in generating fit-for-purpose marine litter data through a participatory science approach (see section 5).
- ▶ Within the SHARED GREEN DEAL context, MIO-ECSDE is the practice lead for the implementation of 4 social experiments aiming to explore the different values that people place upon biodiversity in rural and urban areas from a transitions perspective. In the beginning of 2023, four local partners (representing local organisations and local governments from across Europe) were selected out of a total of 84 applicants to work together with SHARED GREEN DEAL on the Preserving Biodiversity experiment stream of the project, namely: Posoški razvojni center (Tolmin, Slovenia), Ballyhoura Development CLG (Kilfinane, Ireland), Environment and health department, City of Stockholm, (Stockholm, Sweden) and the Municipality of Amaroussion, Athens, Greece. MIO-ECSDE is supporting the four local partners in implementing their experiments over the course of 2023-2024 by placing local communities from across Europe at the forefront of solutions to achieve the EU’s Biodiversity Strategy and the EU Green Deal priority on putting nature on a path to recovery by 2030. In fact, on November 14-15, the Preserving Biodiversity team met for the second time in Athens, Greece to discuss the progress on the local experiments, challenges faced and learned from each organisation’s experience in engaging their local communities in the fight against biodiversity loss.

3.3.3. Marine and coastal issues

MIO-ECSDE closely followed the progress of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and continued to be a member of the Working Group on Good Environmental Status (WG GES) and the Marine Strategic Coordination Group (MSCG). Furthermore, MIO-ECSDE has been actively contributing to the work of the EU/MSFD Good Environmental Status (GES) Technical Subgroup on Marine Litter. More specifically:

- ▶ In June 2023, MIO-ECSDE participated in the in-person meeting of the MSFD Technical Group on Marine Litter held in Brussels and made several interventions related to a series of tasks that it contributed to or has been co-leading, namely: the elaboration of the updated guidance document on how to carry out beach macrolitter surveys; the updating of a comprehensive list of some 100 marine litter related projects that was published by the JRC/MSFD TGML; the thorough mapping of marine litter prevention and mitigation measures. In addition, MIO-ECSDE has been actively engaged in discussions concerning the identification of a methodological approach for setting a threshold value for seafloor macrolitter at pan-European level.

In 2023, MIO-ECSDE actively participated in a large number of high visibility European and Mediterranean events and also launched and/or joined key related initiatives and campaigns:

- ▶ In March and April 2023, MIO-ECSDE ran the Plastic Busters CAP participatory science campaign on marine litter. The Mediterranean-wide campaign targeted local community actors, from NGOs, diving associations, divers' clubs, business and industry, coastal communities, universities, expert communities to public authorities and others. Participants were invited to get involved and make an impact by carrying out a beach litter survey or a seafloor litter survey from the 1st to 30th of April 2023. In order to facilitate the campaign MIO-ECSDE developed supporting materials (i.e. guidelines, recording sheets, etc.) and implemented a series of four capacity building webinars. Read more at <https://shorturl.at/jpEX1>. The campaign garnered significant interest from 60 organizations spanning 14 Mediterranean countries, including Albania, Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Jordan, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Slovenia, and Tunisia. Notably, three organizations from Sri Lanka and Togo also expressed their keenness to participate. The campaign successfully concluded with 16 dedicated organizations completing 17 beach litter surveys and 3 seafloor litter surveys. The commendable work of 98 marine litter practitioners provided invaluable data for Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Slovenia, and Tunisia. Read more at: <https://shorturl.at/aefnN>
- ▶ In March 2023, MIO-ECSDE, participated as a speaker in the round table of the launch event of the Dialogue4Tourism Interreg Euro-MED project focusing on the future of sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean basin.
- ▶ In October 2023, MIO-ECSDE participated as a speaker in the Motomundi International Annual Festival on environment and climate change, organized by the University of Siena. The presentation centered on the transformation of community-based marine litter research into collective actions for marine litter prevention.
- ▶ In November 2023, MIO-ECSDE, participated as a speaker in the second international TouMaLi Conference on "Effective Waste Management for Sustainable Tourism and Marine Ecosystem Protection". MIO-ECSDE, key partner of the Med4Waste project, presented an overview of the project's capitalization actions for promoting sustainable waste management governance in the Mediterranean. During the 2-day Conference, WES activities were also showcased as one of the key initiatives in the region that work on marine litter pollution.

3.3.4. Culture and Sustainability in the Mediterranean

Within this overall framework, during 2023 MIO-ECSDE did the following:

- ▶ Maintained and further promoted the HYDRIA virtual museum (www.hydrproject.info) – acknowledged as a good example bridging ESD and cultural practices (see [here](#)). It is a member of

the Board of the Global Network of Water Museums-WAMUNET (see 3.3.1). The technical and aesthetical updating of the Hydria webpage was completed in 2022 while HYDRIA will be further enriched with a new section/e-exhibition within the Credit Project (see section 4).

- ▶ The e-learning course about Mediterranean Food ([here](#)), largely based on the MIO-ECSDE educational package “Mediterranean Food: Historical, Environmental, Health & Cultural dimensions” (produced in five Mediterranean languages [here](#)) remains active.
- ▶ On the 23rd of March, MIO-ECSDE participated in an online event organised by the Med4Waste project with the support of the UfM and ENI CBC Med and PRIMA Programmes, focusing on urban organic waste. Mr. Haris Paliogiannis, policy and project manager at MIO-ECSDE and Ms Alessandra Sensi, Head of Sector – Environment, Green and Blue Economy at the UfM, wrapped up the event by summarizing some of the key actions to promote sustainable waste management of resources in the Mediterranean region, in view of its social, economic and political heterogeneity.
- ▶ On the 8th of June, MIO-ECSDE moderated a panel discussion during an EU Green Week side event on capacity-building and greening of skills of the waste management sector in the Mediterranean. The event was organised by the Med4Waste project and aimed to showcase various initiatives that are being carried out throughout the Mediterranean region to improve the necessary skills for sustainable waste management at different levels, from providing direct technical and financial support to local needs, to strengthening skills through meaningful capacity building schemes, and through mainstreaming good practices into public policies and municipal waste management plans.
- ▶ On the 6th of July, MIO-ECSDE participated in the launch of the Sustainable Innovative Economy Mission of the Interreg Euro-MED programme to present the capacity building program and mentoring activities that will be developed over the 7-year course of the project and are co-led by MIO-ECSDE.

4. Implementing Education for Sustainable Development through the MEDIES secretariat

Through the MEDIES Initiative, MIO-ECSDE plays a leading role in promoting Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the Mediterranean, with activities ranging from drafting and following ESD policies, authoring of books and materials, trainings-of-trainers, to grass-root activities at school level. ESD is an “umbrella” type of education that ultimately equips learners with sustainability knowledge, values, skills, and motivation to act for a more just and meaningful life.

MEDIES was acknowledged as an example of regional (Mediterranean) capacity building from NGOs in the report “Teacher education for the green transition” that was launched in early 2023. The report is linked to the recent EU Council Recommendation on learning for the green transition and sustainable development, and reviewed documented research and good practices in relation to effective teacher education for sustainability, with the purpose of informing policy decision-making and related policy frameworks.

An overview of the activities in 2023 can be summarised as follows:

- ▶ Facilitating the e-network of educators (www.medies.net).
- ▶ Following ESD political processes at many levels (European, UfM, UNECE, UNESCO, UNEP-MAP, etc). Various processes have progressed as explained in 3.1.2.3.
- ▶ Authoring and producing new teaching and learning materials (in printed or e-form).
- ▶ Continuing projects on marine litter/plastics, water, ESD pedagogy, etc.
- ▶ Facilitating the Mediterranean Universities Network for ESD (MedUnNET).
- ▶ Preparing and disseminating on a quarterly basis the e-bulletin to its members (see MEDIES bulletins).
- ▶ Piloting projects in the host country (Greece) in order to replicate them throughout the Mediterranean Region.

4.1. *Project on Recycling, Single-Use Plastics and Marine Litter*

The collaboration of MIO-ECSDE with the Hellenic Recovery Recycling Corporation (HERRCO) in 2023 continued to be minimal, due to limited funding. Nevertheless, MEDIES continued with the implementation of the Program in a few schools and focused on teacher trainings. In particular, the program was introduced as a didactic subject of postgraduate students of the Didactics of Chemistry, New Educational Technologies and Education for Sustainable Development (DIXINET-ESD) of the University of Athens (EKPA) and enriched with shadow observation in an application in three (3) classes of a primary school (K6-K12). In this school with multicultural elements the countries of origin of the pupils except Greece were: Albania, Romania, Georgia, Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, Tunisia, Algeria, Syria, Pakistan, Egypt, Libya, Palestine. Greeks from Northern Epirus/Albania also attend the school, as well as Roma with a distinct ethnic element, Greek-Roma and Albanian-Roma. It was also piloted, twice, in kindergarten pupils with special adaptations of inclusion and tolerance for kids with special needs and skills. The relevant educational material was distributed to students and teachers. The Institute of Educational Policy (IEP of the Ministry of Education and Culture) confirmed that the Programme is included in the thematic cycle, “Caring for the environment” and included within the "Platform 21+: Skills Workshops" designed for Primary and Secondary Education also during the 2023-2024 school

year. Read more about the Programme [here](#), download the educational material [here](#) or view the [flipbook](#) (suggested form of viewing).

4.2. *Erasmus+ Mobility Courses for European teachers (Key Action 1)*

These week-long courses for European Educators are meant to be regularly organised, with the aim to build the skills of teachers in delivering meaningful educational interventions on various thematics that are linked to ESD. Participants are educators in Europe-based Schools and Adult Learning Institutions, whose expenses are covered through Erasmus+ Mobility grants of their institution (usually Accredited as Erasmus+ schools). This autumn, three MIO-ECSDE week-long courses took place on the following topics:

- Animation in Education, 8 - 15 September, with 9 participants from Malta. [Read more](#)
- Marine Litter Education, 1 - 7 October, with 7 participants, from Malta. [Read more](#).
- Education on Non-Conventional Water Resources, 15 - 21 October, with 12 participants from Malta. [Read more](#)

4.3. *Web-based education applications on water and climate change*

The online web application on water developed by MIO-ECSDE which is available in [English](#) and [Greek](#) was promoted throughout the year. Learners are invited to discover in an interactive manner the various aspects of non conventional water resources, urban water vulnerability, climate change challenges, etc. Though the materials have been developed for learners of 10-13 years old, several sections can be used either by younger or older students.

4.4. *Beach Clean-Ups (in Greece)*

MEdIES supported the organisation of beach litter clean-up and monitoring in the following events:

- on 5 May together with the Environmental Team from the 53rd Athens High School (an eco-school) at the SEF Faliro beach (Attica). The highly motivated team of 35 students and teachers removed more than 100 Kg of marine litter; on 11 May, in Elefsina, as part of the “2023 Eleusis European Capital of Culture” and within the “Pupils’ International Conference on the Transition to a Climate Neutral Future” MEdIES organised a “mini clean-up” and a related educational workshop on marine litter with 25 students; on 3 October once again at the SEF Faliro beach together with more than 100 Lyceum students from the 2nd Tositsio Arsaqueo Lyceum of Athens, in the framework of the KA1 course on marine litter. The beach was relatively clean from macro-litter this time, and our clean-up focused on the abundant micro-litter.

4.5. *Mediterranean food: Our legacy, our future*

This project is essentially the adaptation of [SIDUMEF](#) in Greece and is supported by the UNESCO Participation Programme 2022-2023. It included the adaptation and production of the SIDUMEF publication in Greek (completed and uploaded [here](#)) and the organisation of a dedicated online training activity for 33 educators that took place on the 27th of November, with invited SIDUMEF speakers and other experts (read more on it [here](#)). Additionally, a public event took place in Athens on the 7th of November with ~50 participants that discussed how the Mediterranean food and diet can serve as a vehicle for sustaining Intercultural Dialogue for Sustainability. Key aim of this small project was the increase of understanding of the environmental and socio-economic aspects of the Mediterranean food and diet today, as well as its dynamic in strengthening and maintaining the intercultural dialogue for sustainability in the Mediterranean region.

4.6. *PLASTEAM: STEAM education for Plastic-free Primary Schools*

PLASTEAM concluded its activities in April 2023. This 30-month long Erasmus+ KA2 Project aimed to educate pupils and teachers of primary schools of five European countries in responsibly using, consuming and recycling plastic items. Its final Conference and last Partners' Meeting took place on March, in Echt (the Netherlands). During the meeting the PLASTEAM key outcomes were presented (the PLASTEAM App and the STEAM-Box), and the winning schools of the PLASTEAM Contest were announced with great anticipation. The shortlist of the finalists' videos is available [here](#). MEDIES led the development of the STEAM-Box, an educational resource motivating students and teachers of primary schools to explore plastic waste issues through STEAM activities. It contains 14 activities, including a methodological guide for teachers (available in Dutch, English, Greek, Italian and Romanian [here](#)). The Final Report of the project has been positively reviewed by the Dutch Authorities.

4.7. *Project in Messara-Crete - Awareness actions in Asterousia BR (UNESCO/MAB)*

This is a small-scale pilot project aiming to promote the essential dialogue between the protection of natural and cultural monuments and Sustainable Development. It is taking place in Messara-Crete of the Asterousia Biosphere Reserve targeting the local population.

The 3rd and 4th Awareness and Information Days were organized involving students, teachers, parents, residents and socio-economic associations and local government officials on February 13 and 14, 2023. Each day included two (2) interventions, one in the morning for school students and a second one in the afternoon to teachers, parents and socio-economic associations and local government officials. Innovative Experiential group cooperative activities were carried out in Primary, Middle and High School in remote schools of the region on the theme of "Education for Sustainable Development in the Protected Area of the Asterousia Biosphere Reserve". In the afternoons, Educators and Citizens Awareness & Training Events were held in small mountainous rural villages, with significant participation and enriched with enthusiastic dialogue and submission of proposals. The distribution of the information material ([GR](#) and [ENG](#)) on the Asterousia Biosphere Reserve encouraged the involvement of the participants.

4.8. *Tinkering for Sustainability in School*

MIO/MEdIES Secretariat is a partner in the "[Tinkering for Sustainability at School](#)" Project (funded by ERASMUS+ KA2), together with the University of Iceland (Lead), NEMO Science Museum of Amsterdam, the Centre for Research and European Studies – Future Business (CRES-Italy), and Bartolomeo Associazione Culturale (Italy). The project aspires to link the methodologies of tinkering and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) at the primary school level through a series of activities: Mapping in the curricula of partner countries (completed); Co-creation and piloting of educational resources (in progress); Trainings and dissemination events. Since its launching in November 2022, two project meetings were organized: the kick-off meeting, hosted by NEMO in Amsterdam (25-27 January 2023) and the 2nd Partners Meeting in Milan (5-7 June). In both meetings the partners explored areas where ESD and tinkering can be best merged through dedicated workshops. Currently, the partners are preparing a set of educational (tinkering) activities on sustainability topics, to be included in the "Tinkering for Sustainability" Toolkit while the "Methodology guidelines of Tinkering for Sustainability in School" has been completed in English, Italian and Greek. The next Partners Meeting will be hosted in Athens (5-8 February 2024).

4.9. *Be2aty / My Environment project*

[Be2aty / My Environment](#) project aims to empower Egyptian youth, through non-formal education activities (such as bootcamps, exhibitions and mentoring schemes) to become innovators for environmental protection and sustainable waste management. Led by the Goethe Institute (Cairo), the three-year project, that was launched in April 2023, brings together a consortium of Egyptian and EU based partners, among them MIO-ECSDE /MEdIES, to join forces and build the skills of Egyptian youth to tackle urgent local environmental problems, while at the same time increasing their capacity to support them. The kick-off meeting was organized and hosted by the Goethe Institute in Cairo on 13 June. Following that, the Dissemination Strategy was prepared by MIO-ECSDE, and the “heart of the project” the first pilot bootcamp, is scheduled for the beginning of 2024.

4.10. *Creative Digital Waters*

In February 2023 the 24-month “[Creative Digital waTers](#)” (CreDiT) project kicked-off. The consortium includes the Global Network of Water Museums, the Aquatika-freshwater aquarium of Karlovac, Canali de Bologna Museum, VirtalGeo and Doc Servizi, while MIO-ECSDE participates through its virtual museum “HYDRIA”. The project is co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme aiming at improving people’s, and particularly youth’s, access to and understanding of the precious water heritage, inside and outside water museums. To this end, co-creation of digital campaigns and new tools, custom-made for each partner (digital routes, 3D models, e-media for kids, etc.) will take place through a series of workshops and trainings (engaging also local artists and educational institutions) as well as dissemination events. So far, the partners have taken part in the first series of workshops facilitated by the experts of Virtual Geo and DocServizi in order to advance their digitization campaigns. In addition, the digitization campaign for the HYDRIA Virtual Museum took place in Athens, from 28 to 30 September at the premises of MIO-ECSDE. The professional team of DocServizi visited MIO-ECSDE premises and took approx. 3,000 photos(!) to record a collection of 68 traditional water jars from Greece and other Mediterranean countries. The digitized elements and files of the water jars will consist the new digital sub-exhibition of the HYDRIA Virtual Museum [Read more here](#).

4.11. *Physical and Augmented Reality for Climate Change Education (PARCCE)*

November 1st 2023 marks the launching of a new 36-month Erasmus plus KA2 programme, that will be led by MIO-ECSDE. Together with partners from Cyprus, Italy, France and Greece (including MIO-ECSDE members Legambiente and U marinu), the project addresses climate change through quality, inclusive and engaging education. More specifically, the project aspires (i) to create a critical mass of educators, capable of transmitting the fundamental principles of climate change literacy through ESD by using innovative materials which incorporate augmented reality and ICT tools; (ii) to help pupils understand and address the impacts of the climate crisis, empowering them with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed to act as agents of change, and (iii) further influence their families and the wider school community to adapt to what is already a global emergency. The kick-off Meeting took place in Athens (MIO-ECSDE premises) on 11-12 December, setting the base for the activities to unfold over the next 3 years. Read more about the kick-off [here](#)

4.12. *YOU(th) CARE FOR CHANGE*

In December 2023 a new 40-month European project (funded by the DEAR Programme) was launched entitled “YOU(th) CARE FOR CHANGE: Engaging new generations on innovative, joint and multidimensional actions addressing the Global Challenges”. MIO-ECSDE is a key partner in this project that seeks to reinforce active citizenship and engagement of youth through empowering youth organizations and groups in Italy, Spain, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Czech Republic, Hungary,

Greece and in Albania, Serbia, Tunisia, Morocco, through multiple targeted activities (capacity building, campus, learning platform, youth assemblies and fora) so that they are engaged in co-designing and applying their own actions on SDGs in their local communities. The project has a strong cross-cutting priority on gender equity. Read more about it [here](#).

4.13. MEdIES networking

In 2023 MEdIES has continued to engage with several education networks of mutual interest, such as the [Climate ECOS Community](#), [Action for Climate \(ACE\) by UNFCC](#), the Paris Committee on Capacity-Building ([PCCB Network](#)), the [Bridge 47 Network](#), the [Global Education Monitoring \(GEM\)](#) the [Futures of Education](#) (UNESCO), the [#ESDfor2030](#) framework, the [Teaching for Climate Action Initiative](#) the [EU4Ocean Initiative and the Education for Climate Community of the EC](#), and recently, the [Greening Education Partnership \(GEP/UNESCO\)](#).

MEdIES Secretariat was happy to remotely join a meeting for youth engagement on climate change organized by LDA Tunisia (4th July), within the project READY (ERASMUS YOUTH 2021 CB PROGRAMME), and hold a workshop on effective climate communication. In Greece, during the first semester of 2023 the secretariat has been involved with demonstrating projects of ESD in non-formal and informal contexts to the postgraduate students of the Didactics of Chemistry, New Educational Technologies and Education for Sustainable Development (DIXINET-ESD) of the University of Athens (UoA).

5. Running international projects

5.1. The Water and Environment Support (WES) project

MIO-ECSDE and RAED are members in the consortium that was awarded the regional EU-funded project Water and Environment Support mechanism (2019-2024). The overall aim is to assist the implementation of an integrated approach to pollution reduction and prevention in line with the UfM Agendas and Barcelona Convention and to contribute to a more efficient management of scarce water resources in the Neighbourhood South region (www.wes-med.eu).

Within 2023, considerable progress was made in relation to the WES marine litter activities in Morocco and Algeria. Two highlights were:

- ▶ A WES workshop in Algeria enhanced capacities in marine litter monitoring and mitigation. Thirty passionate individuals from Algeria participated in a captivating two-day immersive training workshop focused on marine litter. Taking place on May 30-31, 2023, in the scenic coastal wilaya of Ain Temouchent, the workshop provided an ideal setting for knowledge exchange and skill development. Read more at <https://shorturl.at/djuU7>
- ▶ WES supported Morocco's fight against marine litter with comprehensive monitoring actions in Tetuan. A group of 25 Moroccans came together at a two-day hands-on training workshop held in Tetuan on April 23-24, 2023. The workshop aimed to strengthen the skills and knowledge of the participants in utilizing cutting-edge techniques for monitoring macrolitter and microlitter on the sea surface, as well as macrolitter on the seafloor. The workshop was organized back-to-back with a marine litter monitoring campaign conducted in Tamuda bay, as part of WES. This campaign marked the second in a series, with the first one taking place in October 2022. Read more at <https://shorturl.at/hyH09>

In both countries a first set of marine litter related data has been generated that will assist them in fulfilling their obligations and implementing relevant measures outlined in the Regional Plan for Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean and the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Barcelona Convention.

Several other activities also took place including national consultations on addressing the SUPs challenge in Jordan and Lebanon, a regional Peer-to-Peer (P2P) process dedicated to "Overall environmental governance - Promotion of the Aarhus Convention in the whole of the Mediterranean", the 1st Regional Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus Roundtable in the Mediterranean on 'Promoting Innovation, Investments and Upscaling of Solutions' (6-7 June 2023, Rabat, Morocco). The latter was attended by more than 140 participants from 15 countries. Representatives of national authorities, stakeholders and regional institutions agreed on the need for a Strategic Framework for the WEFE Nexus in the Mediterranean's source to sea continuum, to guide integration of policy and management instruments and action lines across sectors to address risks related to water, energy, food and environmental security, and promote leveraging of necessary funding. Aiming at promoting advances of the WEFE Nexus approach, the Regional WEFE Nexus Roundtable was organized within the joint initiative of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), Barcelona Convention and the European

Union, by the Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean (GWP-Med) and the Water and Environment Support (WES) in the ENI Southern Neighbourhood region Project Team and was hosted by Morocco's Ministry of Equipment and Water and Ministry of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development, with contributions by and in the framework of the GEF UNEP/MAP MedProgramme Child Project 2.2. on Nexus, the EU-funded WES project, the Sida/UfM MENA Water Matchmaker 2 Project and the PRIMA WEFE4MED Project.

Following up on the 2021 WES regional trainings focusing on Awareness Raising and Education for Sustainable Development on the topics of (a) consumption, and (b) water, MIO-ECSDE is undertaking a second phase in the eight WES Partner Countries including a survey, on-line mentoring of selected cases and eventually targeted thematic workshops, , where participants can meaningfully benefit from WES expert assistance in their next steps. [Read more](#)

Under the WES project, a Call for Expression of Intent was launched in May 2023, so as to identify Mediterranean "Champions" of plastic pollution prevention. The effort is to recognise, support and motivate those who voluntarily contribute with innovative solutions to combat the challenge of pollution from plastics. After an extensive evaluation of 109 applications, 87 applicants were selected to be considered Candidate Champions. In the end around 50 Cooperation Agreements were signed. You can read more [here](#). The implementation of actions is underway and next year WES will assess if, by August 2024 the intent/commitment has been fulfilled or if it has sufficiently advanced, based on which, the title "Mediterranean Champion for Plastic Pollution Prevention" will be awarded by WES, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Mediterranean Action Plan of UNEP (UNEP/MAP).

Two national WES Meetings took place in the last semester of the year. On November 1st, in the framework of the 2023 Cairo Water Week (CWW), the WES National Meeting for Egypt was held and WES also participated in other CWW events. On November 28th, the WES National Meeting for Tunisia took place in Tunis, with the privilege of the presence of the Minister of Environment, who has been very supportive of WES overall.

Read more at www.wes-med.eu.

5.2. The ENI CBC MED MED4WASTE

The ENI CBC MED project entitled "Mediterranean Dialogue for Waste Management Governance (MED4WASTE) kicked off in October 2021 and closed at the end of 2023. The two-year long project aimed at facilitating new governance models for integrated and efficient urban waste management policies across the Mediterranean. Its main lines of action were: (1) building on and improving existing knowledge to foster capitalisation of socially innovative, integrated and efficient practices from public, private and social sectors in waste management, with special focus on waste prevention and circular economy approaches; (2) offering guidance and training for public administrations and relevant private and social stakeholders, to apply transferring actions and exploitation measures and to support planning, adapting and re-addressing of waste management plans, policies and other management actions and normative drivers; (3) supporting dissemination of key results and increase awareness among key stakeholders, promote cross-border and cross-sectorial networking, and foster long-term commitment of decision and policy makers to promote an environmental, socio-economic and institutional transition towards green growth. The project actions were implemented in Spain, Greece, Tunisia, Lebanon, Jordan, and Italy. It was led by Fundació Universitària Balmes (Universitat de Vic – Universitat Central de Catalunya), while MIO-ECSDE was co-leading the policy dialogue and mainstreaming, and cross fertilization activities of the project.

During the second year of implementation of the project (2023), the following highlights took place in which MIO-ECSDE played a key role:

- Organisation of the online webinar "A better urban organic waste management for a more resilient Mediterranean agriculture" (23 May 2023). Supported by UfM, ENI CBC MED and PRIMA programmes and proceeding the 4th UfM Working Group on Environment and Climate Action, this event organised by the Med4Waste capitalisation project was a unique opportunity to discuss about Mediterranean challenges on organic waste management. In line with the International Compost Awareness Week 2023 under the specific theme of "Healthier soil, healthier food...Compost!", the webinar brought together more than 150 participants from 25 countries from across the Mediterranean region and beyond, to address the challenges and shared solutions regarding urban organic waste management and discuss the ways towards more resilient agricultural systems in the Mediterranean region.
- Organisation of the EU Green Week 2023 side-event "The power of capacity building schemes: moving towards a zero waste Mediterranean" (8 June 2023) focusing on the enabling factors to strengthen the capacity of key agents in the waste management chain to deliver the transition i.e., create an 'enabling environment', develop the institutional setting, be able to enforce it and thus ultimately lead to reduction in waste volumes in the Mediterranean. The event was well-attended and was a great opportunity for participants to learn more about the project's results and those of other projects (Med-INA, SIRCLES, REUSEMED, WES, SIMIL) working on improving waste management practices and governance in the Mediterranean as well as discuss about the way we can effectively support stakeholders for stronger regulatory frameworks and policy incentives on sustainable waste management.
- The online course (MOOC) on waste management and circular economy practices named "[Med4ZeroWaste & Circular Economy](#)" focusing on the fundamental principles of circular economy while it showcases useful zero waste practices, and successful actions developed by other ENI CBC Med projects. The course is currently being translated into Arabic to maximize its dissemination to other Mediterranean countries.
- The targeted [Mentoring Scheme](#) of the project which provided guidance and technical support to six sub-national public authorities in charge of planning, collecting, and managing waste in southern Mediterranean countries. The goal of this mentoring program is to improve or develop the integrated municipal waste management (IMWM) plans of these cities; help them implement a tailored supporting action that aligns with their plans; and promote the replication of successful actions being implemented in other projects from the ENI CBC-Med community through a twinning and exchange program. MIO-ECSDE is responsible for financing the activities supporting the Municipality of Deir Qanon El Naher.
- The Closing Conference of the project took place in partnership with the WES project in Sardinia on 24-26 October (read more under 3.2.5).
- The Policy Toolkit on municipal waste management was finalized in November 2023. It was developed by MIO-ECSDE with contributions of key experts and is available in English, French and Arabic. The objective of the document is to transmit to key Mediterranean actors a set of concise recommendations and policy guidelines to promote better governance in the sustainable use of resources and management of waste and facilitate achieving a circular economy in the Mediterranean. You can access it [here](#).

5.3. The ENI CBC MED Plastic Busters CAP

In January 2022, the ENI CBC MED project entitled "Fostering knowledge transfer to tackle marine litter in the Med by integrating EbA into ICZM (Plastic Busters CAP) kicked-off and closed with the end of 2023. Plastic Busters CAP aimed to facilitate decision-makers and stakeholders in effectively tackling

the problem of marine litter by integrating EbM (Ecosystem-Based Management Approach) into ICZM (Integrated Coastal Zone Management) planning towards good environmental status.

The project sought to consolidate and fully exploit the knowledge obtained by five relevant projects in order to develop tailor-made capitalization actions that will create the enabling conditions for a societal shift towards sustainable consumption and production patterns, and a truly circular and green economy. In the long-term, the project will contribute to enhancing ecosystem services via a reduced leakage of marine litter and marine plastic pollution in the Mediterranean Sea and reduced emissions of greenhouse gases by a wise use and sustainable disposal of plastics. Plastic Busters CAP was a 24 month-long project, with a total budget of € 1.1 million and was co-funded by the European Union under the ENI CBC MED Programme 2014-2020. Plastic Busters CAP brought together partners from 7 countries of the Mediterranean region, namely Egypt, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Spain and Tunisia.

The backbone of Plastic Busters CAP was the Interreg Med Plastic Busters MPAs; both projects were implemented within the framework of the UfM labelled Plastic Busters initiative that addresses the issue of marine litter and plastic pollution in the entire Mediterranean region. Plastic Busters MPAs implemented pilot marine litter monitoring and mitigation actions in northern Mediterranean countries (Albania, Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Spain, Slovenia), while Plastic Busters CAP replicated such actions in southern Mediterranean countries, namely Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia.

The Plastic Busters MPAs partners, UNISI and MIO-ECSDE were leading members of the Plastic Busters CAP consortium. UNISI was the coordinator of the project, while MIO-ECSDE led the marine litter monitoring and mitigation component of the project. The other 5 partners of the project were: Legambiente Onlus (Italy), Higher Council for Scientific Research – Institute of Marine Sciences (Spain), El Ramis Society for Local Community Development of Barrany (Egypt), National Institute of Marine Sciences and Technologies – Department of Marine Environment (Tunisia), Tyre Coast Nature Reserve (Lebanon), University of Jordan – Aqaba Branch Faculty of Basic and Marine Sciences, Department of Marine Biology (Jordan).

Some of the project highlights for 2023 were:

- ▶ The elaboration of 2 resource packs addressing marine litter monitoring and marine litter mitigation aspects, respectively.
- ▶ The organization of the Mediterranean-wide Plastic Busters CAP e-course on marine litter monitoring and mitigation that took place on the 17th and 19th of January 2023 and brought together 256 participants. The e-course was organized by MIO-ECSDE and UNISI with the support of the EU funded “Water and Environment Support (WES) in the ENI Neighbourhood South Region” project. Read more at <https://shorturl.at/fkBM5>
- ▶ The implementation of the Mediterranean-wide Plastic Busters CAP participatory science campaign on marine litter, coordinated by MIO-ECSDE. Participants were invited to get involved and make an impact by carrying out a beach litter survey or a seafloor litter survey from the 1st to 30th of April 2023. Read more at <https://shorturl.at/jpEX1>
- ▶ The organization of a national training and research expedition on marine litter in Matruh, 1-2 March 2023. A group of 30 Egyptians gathered at a two-day hands-on training workshop and research expedition organized by MIO-ECSDE, UNISI and El Ramis Society for Local Community Development of Barrany (a member of RAED). Read more at <https://shorturl.at/fswD2>
- ▶ The organization of a national training and research expedition on marine litter in Aqaba, 14-16 March 2023. Fifty dedicated students from the University of Jordan joined the Plastic

Busters CAP team members, namely MIO-ECSDE, UNISI and the University of Aqaba over the course of three days and played a crucial role in collecting samples and conducting surveys to assess the presence and effects of marine litter on beaches, the sea surface, the seafloor, and in biota. Read more at <https://shorturl.at/xAGKT>

- ▶ The organization of the Plastic Busters CAP policy workshop for integrating marine litter into local and national planning. The event took place on 20 September 2023 in Tunis and was organized by the National Institute of Marine Sciences and Technologies of Tunisia (INSTM), in partnership with the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE) and the University of Siena (UNISI). The technical workshop brought together over 40 influential stakeholders, including policy-makers, decision-makers, advisors representing various governance levels, as well as representatives from environmental NGOs and research institutes. Read more at: <https://shorturl.at/lsvT7>
- ▶ The organization of the final hybrid conference of the Plastic Busters CAP, held on November 8, 2023, in Aqaba, Jordan, as well as concurrently at the University of Siena in Italy and online. This event provided a wealth of knowledge, expertise, and invaluable lessons derived from the extensive efforts of the project. The conference was jointly organized by the University of Jordan-Aqaba, the University of Siena, and MIO-ECSDE, in collaboration with the EU-funded "Water and Environment Support (WES) in the ENI Neighbourhood South Region" project under the auspices of the Union for the Mediterranean.

5.4. The H2020 SHARED GREEN DEAL project

In February 2022 an H2020 project kicked-off, in which MIO-ECSDE is a partner. It is entitled Social sciences & Humanities for Achieving a Responsible, Equitable and Desirable GREEN DEAL (SHARED GREEN DEAL), brings together 20+ partners and aims to undertake 24 innovative social experiments in behaviour and practice through the use of comparative (across country) case studies spanning all topic areas of the European Green Deal. This will generate a better understanding of social practices and behavioural change processes, including enabling as well as inhibiting factors. From these interdisciplinary foundations, a new 'Shared Green Deal' network will be launched, and clear policy and governance recommendations will be provided, based on the lessons learnt from the project's experiments. MIO-ECSDE, by bringing in its experience in the research-policy-society interface, in advocacy, networking, awareness-raising and Education for Sustainable Development, will be leading the social experiments on Preserving Biodiversity and will also help draw out of the project experiments insights on zero pollution.

On 24 November 2022 the [call for submissions](#) was launched to support 24 local authorities and not-for-profit organisations from across Europe in conducting funded local experiments that will address the behavioural, social and cultural dimensions of the European Green Deal. These social experiments aim to facilitate and learn from change processes at both individual and collective levels whilst collecting research data in the process.

With more than 950 organisations confirming their interest in becoming SHARED GREEN DEAL partners, and 349 full applications submitted across the six streams, the call to become a local partner of SHARED GREEN DEAL exceeded expectations. After a rigorous evaluation process, four local partners from four different European areas, were selected out of a total of 84 applicants for the [Preserving Biodiversity experiment stream](#) of the SHARED GREEN DEAL project with MIO-ECSDE as practice lead.

The four local partners (Posoški razvojni center (Slovenia), Ballyhoura Development CLG (Ireland), Environment and Health Department, City of Stockholm (Sweden), Municipality of Amaroussion (Greece)) together with the practice and research leads met for the first time on the 24th and 25th of April in Ljubljana, Slovenia to discuss all of the details of how over the next year they will contribute to

the implementation of the Green Deal priority on putting nature on a path to recovery by 2030; create and strengthen relationships with their community and local institutions; benefit from the learning outcomes that can be adopted by their own processes. On 14-15 November, the Preserving Biodiversity team met for the second time in Athens, Greece to discuss the progress on the local experiments, challenges faced and learned from each organisation's experience in engaging their local communities in the fight against biodiversity loss.

5.5. The H2020 SOS-ZEROPOL2030 project

MIO-ECSDE is part of a € 3 million European research project entitled Source to Seas – Zero Pollution 2030 (SOS-ZEROPOL2030) aiming to develop a holistic, stakeholder led zero pollution framework, ultimately reflecting the EU's very ambitious policy and legislative framework governing the environmental protection of our seas with focus on the zero environmental pollution agenda. The four-year SOS-ZEROPOL2030 project, funded by the EU's Horizon2020 scheme, kicked-off on 27 September 2022 and will run till September 2026. Led by MaREI, the SFI Centre for Energy Climate and Marine Research at University College Cork, the project brings together a consortium of 10 European institutions and organizations that form a unique interdisciplinary partnership with expertise in fundamental and applied natural sciences and associated governance concerning marine pollution, in social sciences concerning stakeholder engagement and in human behaviour.

MIO-ECSDE is leading the 'Zero Pollution Accelerator' related work package of the project that seeks to:

- ▶ pave the way for multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral and multi-level actions that can deliver a successful blue green transition towards clean European Seas by 2030, through a truly ambitious, transformational and pragmatic framework and roadmap;
- ▶ foster an effective, swift and wide uptake and replication of novel solutions and best practices by user communities, via fit-for-purpose and user-friendly guidelines that will enable the operationalization of the framework and roadmap towards clean European Seas by 2030;
- ▶ strengthen the science-policy-society interface and ensure a seamless environmental management continuum, where robust knowledge on pollution related issues can be effectively streamlined into a refined policy vision that can deliver an informed societal response that deploys targeted and effective pollution prevention and mitigation approaches.

In October 2023, the annual general assembly of SOS-ZEROPOL2030 was convened in Potsdam, Germany. The assembly served as a platform for discussing the current status of the project and outlining its forthcoming steps. Within the project's scientific component, MIO-ECSDE plays a pivotal role and is actively engaged in the development of an integrated analysis and scenario framework. This framework encompasses various facets, including the identification of primary emission sources along the value chain, the assessment of environmental risks, an evaluation of existing value chain and technological initiatives, and an examination of prevailing governance strategies, efforts, and arrangements. This work primarily focuses on two case study pollutants: per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFASs) and car tire wear particles. The main project highlight for 2023 has been the development and release of the SOS-ZEROPOL2030 Report that sheds light on Member States' efforts to improve European waters. MIO-ECSDE has been one of the main authors of the report, which focuses on four priority pollutants that pose significant risks to the environment, namely nutrients, per- and polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFASs), microplastics, and underwater noise. The report not only highlights these pollutants but also presents associated policy targets and objectives for 2030-2050, outlining the desired environmental status for EU waters. Read more at <https://shorturl.at/epBT6>

5.6. The UNESCO & abrdn Charitable Foundation marine litter project

In September 2022, MIO-ECSDE kick-started a one-year-long project entitled “Monitoring marine litter and generating fit-for-purpose data through a participatory science approach in the Asterousia Biosphere Reserve” funded by UNESCO and the abrdn Charitable Foundation. The project entails actions focused on improving the marine litter knowledge base and evidence in the Biosphere Asterousia Reserve, strengthening its management plan with tailor-made marine litter prevention and mitigation measures and innovative solutions, educating and engaging local communities (in particular youth) in generating fit-for-purpose marine litter data through a participatory science approach.

The project is implemented within the framework of an initiative undertaken by UNESCO and the abrdn Charitable Foundation entitled “Promoting sustainable development through UNESCO’s programmes and sites”. Running over 3 years, the initiative focuses on promoting a more sustainable and climate-neutral Europe by working through research and education, with the goal to develop innovative solutions to environmental and climate change challenges in selected UNESCO sites, 5 per year.

The main highlights of the project for 2023 are presented below:

- ▶ Two impactful participatory science campaigns were conducted in the late winter and spring of 2023. In total 250 local community members, including grassroots NGO members, university students, teachers and schoolchildren, residents and long-term visitors took part in the 18 beach litter surveys carried out in 9 carefully selected locations within the Asterousia Biosphere Reserve. Read more at <https://shorturl.at/tOR06> and <https://shorturl.at/hpv79>
- ▶ Nine on-site and two online capacity building and awareness raising events were organized focused on the topic of marine plastic pollution and community-based research, involving 65 stakeholders from the Asterousia Biosphere Reserve. In addition, two school interventions and two school field activities were conducted, involving 215 teachers and students from four primary schools of the Asterousia Biosphere Reserve.
- ▶ A 44-page Marine Litter Assessment Report was elaborated.
- ▶ A dynamic and inclusive workshop was held to foster a collaborative, co-creative, and inclusive environment, encouraging vibrant discussions and the identification of innovative measures to prevent and mitigate marine litter within the Asterousia Biosphere Reserve. The workshop brought together over forty stakeholders from various backgrounds with the aim to establish consensus on the most promising and scalable measures that should be incorporated into the Biosphere Reserve’s Management Plan. A total of seven science-based marine litter measures were agreed upon, prioritizing prevention actions over mitigation ones. Read more at <https://shorturl.at/bAY03>
- ▶ Three Memoranda of Understanding were signed between the project core partners and the three municipalities of the Asterousia Biosphere Reserve to solidify their collaboration and shared commitment to transform the Asterousia Biosphere Reserve into a litter-free area. The Memorandum of Understanding outlines five strategic lines of action that will effectively combat the threat of marine litter within the reserve. These include the implementation of sustainable public procurement practices, the enhancement of waste management infrastructure, the reinforcement of beach cleaning programs, the support for adopt-a-beach schemes and participatory science campaigns, and the execution of targeted awareness-raising campaigns.

- ▶ A scientific article titled "Assessing Marine Macrolitter on the Coastline of the Asterousia Biosphere Reserve: Insights from a Community-Based Study" was published in the peer-reviewed scientific journal *Marine Pollution Bulletin*. Access the article at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpolbul.2023.115474>

5.7. FOLOU project

In January 2023, a HORIZON Research and Innovation Actions project entitled "Bringing Knowledge and consensus to prevent and reduce FOod LOss at the primary production stage. Understanding, measuring, training and adopting" (FOLOU) kicked off. The 4-year long project brings together 16 multidisciplinary partners from 10 countries (Spain, Italy, Belgium, Norway, Austria, Greece, Ireland, France, UK) with the aim to set up all the necessary mechanisms to (i) measure and estimate (robust and harmonized methodology), (ii) monitor and report (national and EU Food Loss registries), and (iii) assess the magnitude and impact of Food Losses. Additionally, FOLOU will also work to assure the appropriate knowledge transfer and adoption of the project outcomes by the key targeted stakeholders: primary producers, retailers, consumers, policymakers and researchers.

As a network of networks, MIO-ECSDE will support the exploitation, communication and dissemination of the project's outcomes and will:

- ▶ Support the twinning programme activities of the project by identifying regions and actors interested in replicating the experience of FOLOU beyond the partners' territorial coverage;
- ▶ Support in synthesizing the project's findings and the policy analysis of regulations impacting food loss in the EU into a set of recommendations on food loss reduction along the value chains of primary production on EU level;
- ▶ Organise at least one national stakeholder workshop to disseminate preliminary project results to as many stakeholders as possible and to collect feedback which will be integrated in the final formulation of policy recommendations and guidelines.

During this period, MIO-ECSDE assisted the consortium partners in diverse tasks such as developing the stakeholder engagement strategy of the project and paving the way for the mapping of policies on food loss and waste. The next General Meeting of the project will take place in Ancona, on 25-26 January 2024.

5.8. Interreg Euro-MED Mission Innovative Sustainable Economy

The Innovative Sustainable Economy Mission of the Interreg Euro-MED Programme is a 7-year project aiming to boost a fair transition to a circular economy in the Mediterranean through two governance projects (Thematic Community Project and Institutional Dialogue Project) by developing innovative technical knowledge and ensuring these new solutions are transferred into public policies. MIO-ECSDE will be involved in the transferring, mentoring and twinning activities of the Thematic Community Project of the Mission. Among other tasks, it will be analysing projects related to social innovation and supporting the transferring of results through its extensive network in the whole Mediterranean region. The project brings together a consortium of 10 key institutions and organizations from Greece, Italy, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria and Spain that form an experienced partnership in implementing sustainable development policies, action plans, and strategies in the Mediterranean.

The first steps of the Mission took place on the 18th of January 2023 when the Interreg Euro-MED Joint Secretariat invited all partners of the approved Governance projects, including MIO-ECSDE, to a Lead

Partner Seminar in Marseilles, France. The meeting aimed at gathering the Joint Secretariat, the National Contact Points, and the project partners in order to exchange ideas and start working on common action plans for the next seven years, to make the region smarter, greener and improve the governance between its stakeholders.

The Thematic Community Project of the Mission formally kicked off on 30 January 2023, at the premises of the BETA Technology Centre of the University of Vic – Central University of Catalonia (UVic-UCC) which is leading the project.

Thanks to its long-standing collaboration with governments, international organisations, socioeconomic partners and networks, MIO-ECSDE is leading the 'TRANSFER' work package of the project that seeks to foster the uptake of the knowledge produced by thematic Interreg Euro-Med projects on sustainable innovative economy. Such activities falling under the transferring phase of the Mission were presented on the 6th of July 2022 were the Mission was officially launched. The Mission met again in Ljubljana (Slovenia) on the 21st and 22nd of November 2023 for the Interreg Euro MED's event "[Connecting the Dots](#)" that aimed to reunite the 2021-2027 governance projects and discuss what has been done so far and next steps.

5.9. METAVASEA “People-Centered Transition for Maritime Decarbonization in the East Mediterranean”

MIO-ECSDE is a partner in this new project that is led by the Hellenic Marine Environment Protection Association (HELMEPA), based in Greece, and supported by Lloyd's Register Foundation. The project aims to:

- ▶ Provide a region-specific overview of the state of play with regard to maritime decarbonization,
- ▶ Identify necessary skills and competencies to support the green digital transition,
- ▶ Develop flexible training/upskilling/reskilling tools for seafarers, port workers and administrators.

MIO-ECSDE will bring into the project its experience working in the Mediterranean region, on:

- ▶ the science-policy-society interface
- ▶ networking and synergy-building
- ▶ awareness-raising and Education for Sustainable Development
- ▶ capacity building of wide-ranging stakeholders
- ▶ capitalization and transferring

METAVASEA kicked off on the 6th of October 2023 at the Athina Maritime Learning & Development Center in Athens and will be implemented till September 2028.

5.10. Framework & Service Contracts

MIO-ECSDE is participating in the **Framework Contract entitled "Green Growth and Circular Economy - Supporting activities for stakeholder engagement, exchange of information and best practices. Ad hoc stakeholder engagement activities and stakeholder engagement toolkit (LOT 2)".** Within this framework contract MIO-ECSDE is collaborating with INTRASOFT, AEIDL, TEAMWORK, INSPIIRO and COFFEY. During 2023, MIO-ECSDE did not contribute to any service contract.

6. Publications & other resources

- ▶ The Mediterranean Accession Agenda to the Aarhus Convention. 2023. (<https://shorturl.at/9i8j5>)
- ▶ Med4Waste, 2023. Policy Toolkit on Municipal Waste Management: A Guide for Decision-Makers in the Mediterranean (<https://shorturl.at/jU9X3>)
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- ▶ Mediterranean Diet: our legacy our future ([Greek edition](#))
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