



MedWet

L'initiative pour les zones humides méditerranéennes
The Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative
مبادرة المناطق الرطبة المتوسطية

Wetlands for a Sustainable Mediterranean Region

LIFE.INF Project to upscale wetland communications outreach in the Mediterranean **CONCEPT NOTE**

Preliminary

1. Following the decision of the 13th Meeting of the MedWet Steering Group (Marseille, France, 18-19 May 2016), a draft concept note was prepared outlining the key points of a possible project to be submitted in 2017 by MedWet as leading organization to the European Union (UE) LIFE funding mechanism.
2. Such a project should support the implementation of Target 16¹ of the MedWet Framework for Action 2016-2030 and the MedWet Communications Strategy as adopted by the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com) in February 2016.
3. Following the approval of the draft Concept Note by the 14th Meeting of the MedWet Steering Group on 19 September 2016, the text is now being distributed to a group of selected partners and MedWet Focal Points in targeted countries to request their views and expressions of interest. If sufficient support is obtained for the initiative, a consultant with demonstrated experience in designing EU LIFE projects will be hired in early 2017.
4. The goal will be to finalise a complete proposal to be submitted to the EU by April 2017 so that it then follows the EU LIFE process, potentially with approval by September 2017, ahead of the next Ramsar Conference of the Parties (COP 13) to be held in October 2018.

Context

5. The Mediterranean region, due to its climatic specificities, is amazing for the diversity and importance of its wetlands, including the most common ones like temporary marshes, lakes, reservoirs, rivers, deltas and lagoons. In this region, wetlands support

¹ Target 16: Wetlands values are mainstreamed through communication, capacity development, education participation and awareness.

high concentrations of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish and invertebrate species, many of which are endemic to the region. Furthermore their ecosystems provide resources directly – and for free! – to millions of people. People benefit not only from the direct resources of wetlands but also from the multiple functions and services they offer daily.

6. It is a fact that in the region there is insufficient awareness about wetland values (in particular in respect to their ecosystems services) across a large variety of audiences – with the exception of a limited number of decision makers and experts in wetland/water management with probably notable distinctions to be made between different countries and subregions in the Mediterranean. In the MedWet EU countries, the implementation of the Water Framework Directive is having a significant and positive impact on this issue.
7. Despite the weak level of awareness about wetland values, the implementation of MedWet Framework for Action aligned with the Ramsar Strategic Plan would definitely offer synergies to Mediterranean countries to also deliver on other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and of course the EU legislation.
8. It is also important to recognize the limited capacity of most of MedWet Focal Points, and their respective institutional weight within their own governments, to advance and do more and better for the wetlands agenda at the national level.
9. The current migratory crisis has put at risk the Mediterranean solidarity across the two borders. A campaign emphasizing the need to accelerate the wise use of natural resources with a link to migratory species routes could be part of a new campaign to highlight positive collaboration while also emphasising the contributions of local civil society organizations (CSOs), reinforcing once again the notion that socio-economic development and environmental protection go hand in hand.
10. The current MedWet financial situation does not allow the Initiative to invest heavily in communications and to deliver on the Framework for Action 2016-2030, despite an approved Communications Strategy.
11. An EU LIFE project could therefore offer real financial opportunities for communications with the new mechanism LIFE INFORMATION & GOVERNANCE.

Strategic MedWet vision on LIFE-funded projects

12. Given the scope of LIFE funding opportunities and the need for resources to deliver on the overall MedWet Framework for Action by 2030, a LIFE roadmap for MedWet over the next 10 years would be strategic:
 - a) LIFE INF.1 > Raising awareness about wetland values in 11 MedWet countries to test in different types of Med countries a new wetlands communication campaign and approach;
 - b) LIFE INF.2 > Raising awareness about wetland values in all 27 MedWet countries deploying and reinforcing a Version 2 of the campaign tested in the LIFE INF.1

- (replication of LIFE1 based on lessons learned following the first LIFE experience);
- c) LIFE Biodiversity & Nature > Securing and designating new Ramsar Sites in the Mediterranean (wetlands providing valuable ecosystem services); and
- d) LIFE ENV > Putting in place/strengthening sustainable management of Ramsar Sites in the Mediterranean, restoring the degraded wetland services and promoting sustainable management.

Geographical scope for LIFE INF.1

13. Given MedWet's limited experience with managing LIFE projects, and also the number of MedWet countries and MedWet capacity to work on a full-scale campaign covering all 27 MedWet countries, a reality check indicates that the first LIFE INF should really concentrate on a limited number of countries.
14. **11 countries** have therefore been identified mainly in the Western Mediterranean, all selected for various reasons:
 - a) their real or lesser engagement with MedWet and on wetland issues and those expressing both interest and capacity;
 - b) their geographical position with a mix of:
 - Northern borders: Albania*, Croatia, France, Italy, Malta, Montenegro*, Portugal and Spain (* EU accession countries)
 - Southern borders: Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia;
 - c) their strong and historical status among EU countries versus accession countries and neighbouring countries;
 - d) their solid/weak experience with CSOs; and
 - e) their status vis-à-vis the adoption of the Water Strategy for the Western Mediterranean (5+5 Dialogue) (except Mauritania and Libya, especially as the current political context in Libya is too complicated).

Overall Goal

15. A LIFE.INF would enable the Initiative to launch a **first Wetlands Campaign across a critical mass of Mediterranean countries** to increase the awareness about wetland values in the Mediterranean through a three-year campaign mobilizing national institutions to activate local action supported by relevant CSOs.

NB: This goal is aligned with the Ramsar Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) Programme adopted by Ramsar COP15 in 2015 "People taking action for the conservation and wise use of wetlands", and especially its Goal 6: "Targeting diverse sectors of society to increase awareness, appreciation and understanding of wetlands and the ecosystem services they provide."

Objectives

16. Three main objectives have been identified to deliver this overall goal:
 - a) Make wetland issues and wetland values more mainstream in national societies in order to ensure better and deeper understanding of the need to conserve them;

- b) Engage governments to broadly mobilise and actively relay the campaign; and
- c) Raise awareness while actively mobilising civil society locally.

Target audiences

17. Three different types of audiences will be targeted:

- a) MedWet Focal Points in order to assist them in reaching other relevant sectors in national governments;
- b) Local decision makers (especially around Ramsar Sites); and
- c) CSOs, especially those working on environmental and development issues.

The media should constitute a secondary main audience.

Impacts

18. With such a campaign the following main impacts will be sought:

- a) visible and numerous local actions supported by CSOs; and
- b) recognizable stronger institutional support for wetland topics, reinforcing and delivering Ramsar implementation in the mid-term.

Potential partners

19. Different categories of partners are being approached in the build-up of the overall LIFE INF proposal:

- a) institutional partners: Ramsar - and possible other MEAs like CBD, CITES, CMS, AEWA, UNCCD, UNFCCC, World Heritage;
- b) governments to contribute with EU political weight: France, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain: in a first phase the conditions to involve them and any possible constraints are being explored;
- c) international conservation NGOs to contribute with their expertise and know-how and their knowledge of local CSOs: WWF-MedPO, IUCN-Med, Wetlands International and BirdLife;
- d) technical partners to help deliver key aspects of the campaign: French National Museum of Natural History (MNHN), Wetlands Link International (WLI), Agence Française de la Biodiversité (including ex-Onema), Association Ramsar France, “les pôles relais zones humides”, MedINA, Tour du Valat Research Institute for the conservation of Mediterranean wetlands; Greek Biotope and Wetlands Centre (EKBY), World Water Council (WWC-Med);
- e) scientific partners to give the necessary credibility to the campaign: Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory (Tour du Valat), MedWet Scientific and Technical Network (presently being established), Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel;

- f) ENPI CBC MED (Cross-border cooperation in the Mediterranean) to possibly support the campaign financially and/or technically/institutionally: and
- g) private sector partners to financially support but also leverage the outreach of the campaign selected for:
 - i) their real corporate social responsibility (CSR) commitment and actions on the ground (no greenwashing);
 - ii) their interest in wetland issues and the concept of the campaign: CSR policy, image, geographical outreach, fiscal deductibility; and
 - iii) their business sectors to be approached: banks, insurance, mobile operators, water, tourism.

20. Given MedWet's status vis-à-vis governments, there are NO GO ZONES in terms of collaboration: no partnership with activist NGOs and no conflictual campaign statements, which does not mean that partners cannot themselves have challenging messages depending on local situations.

Campaign approach

- 21. The approach would be to ensure a joint management by a central coordination team but with real delegation to the countries to adapt the campaign to local needs (translation, most relevant messages, and images) while ensuring consistency with the overall concept.
- 22. As a matter of fact, a 100 % centralization by MedWet would be too directive and would not reflect the MedWet spirit, while a 100% delocalization to the countries would not ensure the overall consistency needed to attract some international partners and would not lead to the benefits of economies of scale and synergies.

Budget and Resources

- 23. Given the scope of the project, the total budget should be roughly 3.7 to 4.7 M€ over 3 years for targeting 11 countries.
- 24. A dedicated team will have to be hired at the latest at the start of the campaign, once funds allocation is approved. A minimum of three positions will be needed to coordinate this campaign:
 - a campaign coordinator based at the MedWet Secretariat
 - a communications assistant based with the campaign coordinator (a second communications assistant might be needed with experience in Arabic countries)
 - an administrative assistant (not necessarily based with MedWet)
- 25. It is understood that the MedWet Coordinator will be responsible for leading and conducting the policy work that will be needed under this campaign.

Potential additional funding partners

26. Partners should contribute the 40% counterpart funding required in all LIFE projects. To this end, it will be necessary to approach the following potential funders for such a project:
 - i) institutional funds: Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial (FFEM) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the MAVA Foundation, bilateral government agencies, the Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund (CEPF) and the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI-Med), to obtain 20 to 30 % of the total counterpart funding; and
 - ii) corporate funds: up to 10 to 20 % of the counterpart funding.

Activities per objective

27. **Objective 1: Make wetlands and their values more mainstream in national societies in order to ensure better and deeper understanding of the need to conserve them.**

28. This objective aims at decompartmentalising wetlands speech to ensure better and deeper understanding of Mediterranean wetland values.

29. **Activity 1.1 – INSPIRE Phase: Develop a campaign concept to ensure visibility outside the usual channels and actively engage multiple stakeholders**

Sub-activity 1.1.1 - Develop a list of potential messages consistently linking the campaign with relevant EU legislation, MEAs and the SDGs

Sub-activity 1.1.2 - Develop a list of potential messages consistently linking the campaign with the latest relevant scientific issues/advances

Sub-activity 1.1.3 - Develop a campaign calendar according to strategic international days to suggest visibility beyond the "usual wetland dates"

Sub-activity 1.1.4 - Develop a thorough brief for the campaign

Sub-activity 1.1.5 - Select a communication agency with Mediterranean and/or wetlands experience among a list of 3 to 5 agencies

Sub-activity 1.1.6 - Develop the Brand guidelines of the campaign – visual + relevant messages and tools

Sub-activity 1.1.7 - Develop a full Communications Strategy of the campaign

30. **Activity 1.2 – INSPIRE Phase: Develop a concept to offer a communication platform for private sector partners**

Sub-activity 1.2.1 - Organize one-to-one meetings to ensure a good understanding of the campaign concept and assess communications needs and expectations

Sub-activity 1.2.2 - Sign Memoranda of Cooperation (MOUs) establishing respective key contributions to the campaign, including financial commitments

Sub-activity 1.2.3 - Organize a kick-off session in a strategic Mediterranean place to ensure full mobilisation of partners

Sub-activity 1.2.4 - Develop specific communication plans that are consistent with the overall communication strategy

Sub-activity 1.2.5 - Ensure campaign visibility in private sector partners' communications channels

Sub-activity 1.2.6 - Ensure private sector partners' visibility in campaign communications channels

31. Activity 1.3 – DELIVER Phase: establish a communication task-force to ensure as planned implementation and good governance of the campaign

Sub-activity 1.3.1- Request key partners to nominate communications representatives

Sub-activity 1.3.2 - Organize at least bi-monthly conference calls to assess the progress of the campaign and ensure proper reporting to donors

Sub-activity 1.3.3 - Adjust the campaign calendar and actions according to strategic changes and crisis and communications needs

32. Objective 2: Engage governments to mobilise and actively relay the campaign

33. Activity 2.1 – GET TO KNOW Phase: Assess governments' and focal points' needs based on past World Wetland Day (WWD) activities, current capacity and national civil society wetland awareness

Sub-activity 2.1.1 - Assess success and lessons learned from past WWD activities in each country covered by the campaign

Sub-activity 2.1.2 - Assess activities conducted for other International Days (Biodiversity, Water, etc.) and possible links to be made with WWD to gather MEA focal points' interest

Sub-activity 2.1.3 - Assess national awareness about wetland issues, values and languages through a concise market research survey (if possible against other topics such as water, biodiversity, forests, climate change, etc.)

Sub-activity 2.1.4 - Assess Focal Points' current capacity and future needs to develop the campaign

34. Activity 2.2 – INSPIRE Phase: Inspire the institutional partners to actively join forces

Sub-activity 2.2.1- Organize one-to-one meetings to ensure a good understanding of the campaign concept and assess communications needs and expectations

Sub-activity 2.2.2 - Sign national MOUs highlighting the respective key contributions to the campaign, including financial and capacity commitments

Sub-activity 2.2.3 - Organize a kick-off session in a strategic Mediterranean place to ensure the full mobilisation of partners

Sub-activity 2.2.4 - Develop national communications plans for the campaign consistent with the overall communications strategy

Sub-activity 2.2.5 - Assist in organizing national kick-off sessions with relevant CSOs

Sub-activity 2.2.6 - Provide help in the implementation of the campaign when needed

35. Activity 2.3 – BUILDING BRIDGES Phase: Help National Focal Points to engage with other branches of their institutions, exploiting synergies in communications between wetlands and other key national topics

Sub-activity 2.3.1- Develop national crosswalks tables between national Ramsar commitments and other international commitments

Sub-activity 2.3.2 - Develop tools that the NFP can use to help them to pass the message inside of their administrations

Sub-activity 2.3.3 - Ensure elaboration of key messages integrating wetlands and key topics (biodiversity, climate change, desertification, sustainable use, etc.)

Sub-activity 2.3.4 - Organize a MedWet strategic presence (including full or light “Mediterranean Agora”) at relevant international conferences (Ramsar, CBD, etc.), facilitating dialogue across disciplines and ensuring campaign visibility

36. Objective 3: Raise awareness while actively mobilising civil society

37. Activity 3.1 – GET TO KNOW Phase: Assess national awareness about wetland issues, values and languages

Sub-activity 3.1.1 - Define scope of a national survey and identify possible partners

Sub-activity 3.1.2 - Select partners and organize the research in all countries

Sub-activity 3.1.3 - Develop the relevant tools for the research based on the campaign concept and products

Sub-activity 3.1.4 - Conduct the survey and assess the level of awareness BEFORE the start of the campaign and AT THE END of the campaign

Sub-activity 3.1.5 - Organize sessions to present the results to key partners

38. **Activity 3.2 – GET PREPARED phase: Organize relevant training and briefing sessions for people to help in the campaign implementation and actively engage the public**

Sub-activity 3.2.1 - Develop a communications plan for each key CSO to be clear about needs for assistance

Sub-activity 3.2.2 - Define a list of key-on-the-ground players to ensure public mobilization: guides (WLI) centres), information tourism centres' staff (key World Heritage Sites), volunteer programme managers (This will be STRATEGIC), communications staff, media representatives

Sub-activity 3.2.3 - Develop the campaign tool-kit with relevant products ensuring campaign visibility (e.g., t-shirts, posters)

Sub-activity 3.2.4 - Provide support in organizing national and/or local training and briefing sessions

39. **Activity 3.3 – DELIVERY phase: Implement the campaign according to the defined communications strategy**

Sub-activity 3.3.1 - Amplifying wetlands' share of voice in the media with regular position statements on key topics, media packs including regular press releases with lively yet science-based (when relevant) testimonials, images and infographics

Sub-activity 3.3.2 - Buzzing wetland messages on key social media (Twitter, Facebook mainly) according to a defined and properly outlined social media plan with a list of # to engage and mobilize the public

Sub-activity 3.3.3 - "Infecting" other fora with wetland messages and a presence at national events related to ART (contemporary art painting & photo exhibit) and culture (local community activities: e.g., fishing, weaving), music festivals, environmental film festivals, business conferences mobilizing the respective publics

Sub-activity 3.3.4 - Mobilizing with the World Wetlands Day through a set of relevant Mediterranean and national activities and twinning wetlands across North and South borders of the Mediterranean using a mobile application

Next steps

40. Once feedback is received from countries and potential partners, a new version of the concept note will be prepared and redistributed for final feedback before engaging a consultant with demonstrated experience in designing LIFE projects.