



Report - MedWet Strategic Planning Workshop 2-3 November 2017 - City Hotel, Ljubljana, Slovenia

MedWet members present at this meeting:

Country / Organization	Name	Position
Algeria	Nadjiba BENDJEDDA	Wetlands Project Manager - General Directorate of Forests - Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Jaroslav VEGO	Institute for Physical Planning and Environmental Protection HNC
Egypt	Khaled ALLAM HARHASH	Director, Biodiversity, Central Department Nature Conservation Sector – Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency – Ministry of Environment
France	Ghislaine FERRERE	Wetlands and Ramsar Convention policy officer - Directorate of Water and Biodiversity, Sub-Directorate of Water Protection and Management
Italy	Oliviero MONTANARO	Directorate-general for Nature and Sea Protection – Ministry of Environment Land & Sea
Italy	Rosalinda BRUCCULERI	Directorate general of the Nature and Sea Protection – Ministry of Environment & Sea – External expert
Jordan	Read BANI HANI	Director of Nature Protection Directorate - Ministry of Environment
Lebanon	Adel YACOUB	Head of Department- Ministry of Environment
Morocco	Hayat MESBAH	Head of the Conservation of Wild Flora and Wildlife Service High Commissioner for Water and Forests
Slovenia	Marija MARKES	Head of the Nature Conservation Division – Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning
Slovenia	Gordana BELTRAM	Directorate for the Environment – Nature Conservation Unit – Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning Steering Group Chair
Spain	María Magdalena BERNUES	Wetlands Conservation and Inventory Service - General Directorate of Quality and Environmental Evaluation and Natural Environment - Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Food and Environment
Spain	Maria José VINAL	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Food and Environment
IUCN Med	Antonio TROYA	Director
Ramsar Secretariat	Tobias SALATHE	Senior Advisor for Europe
Tour du Valat	Jean JALBERT	Director General
WWF International's	Denis LANDENBERGUE	Manager for wetlands conservation
WWF North Africa	Faouzi MAAMOURI	Director
Honorary member	Thymio PAPAYANNIS	

Observers present:

MAVA Foundation	Paule GROS	Director, Mediterranean Basin Programs
Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory / TDV	Patrick GRILLAS	Scientific Director
MedWet Secretariat	Isabelle PERROUD	Administrative and Financial Officer

2 November - Afternoon Session 14h00 – 19h00

14h00 Opening and welcome
Gordana Beltram, chair MedWet, Ministry for the Environment and Spatial Planning, Republic of Slovenia

The Chair opened the meeting, welcomed the participants, and thanked the members present for their participation. She recalled the role of the Steering Group and how a smaller group was organized to coordinate MedWet in the interim period due to the absence of a Coordinator.

Five Steering Group members shared the Coordinator's work in the interim period:

- Gordana Beltram: Strategy and overall coordination
- Thymio Papayannis: Strategy and Chair's assistant
- Jean Jalbert: Human Resources and Finances
- Tobias Salathé: Relations with the Members
- Antonio Troya: Project Development

Marija Markeš, Head of the Nature Conservation Division – Directorate for the Environment – Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, welcomed all participants and stressed the meeting's importance for Slovenia, since it brought together representatives from countries around the Mediterranean. She expressed Slovenia's support for MedWet as a regional initiative of the Ramsar Convention and emphasized the importance of nature conservation, including wetlands, for the country. She confirmed that "in Slovenia conservation is not only a profession but a way of life" for many who are dealing with nature and protected areas in particular.

14h10 Trends in Mediterranean wetlands
Patrick Grillas, Mediterranean Wetland Observatory MWO

In his presentation ([MW-SP-attachment1-MWO](#)), Patrick Grillas (PG) informed participants that the new MWO coordinator is Ilse Geijzendorffer. However, since she could not come to Slovenia, Patrick replaced her at this meeting.

PG stressed that the MWO primary objective is to influence decision makers towards better protection and management of Mediterranean wetlands.

The MWO is not only making assessments but is also proposing solutions. It works not only with the Ramsar Convention but is connected to the CBD, AEWa and the Barcelona Convention as well.

The MWO is complementary to the MedWet Secretariat, which helps the MWO to transfer its results into policy work.

PG presented some current trends in wetland extent and an update on the ongoing work and strategy of the MWO 2017 - 2018 and its planned publications for 2018. ([MW-SP-attachment2-MWOPublication](#))

14h20 Ramsar Regional Initiatives – what they are and how they operate Tobias Salathé, Ramsar Secretariat
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Tobias Salathé (TS) started this presentation by recalling the strong presence of the MedWet Secretariat at the last COP at Punta Del Este, notably through the Agora and its programme of exchanges and events. A Resolution on Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRI) was adopted and an *ad hoc* working group worked between 2015 and 2017 to improve the Operational Guidelines for RRI. For the next COP a new Resolution on RRIs is in preparation, and its draft text will be published in January 2018. TS invited the participants to attend the pre-COP regional meetings (February/March) and/or the next Standing Committee meeting on 23-27 April 2018 in Gland and to contribute to the preparation of the COP documents (Draft Resolutions).

In his presentation ([MW-SP-attachment3-Ramsar](#)), TS briefly reminded participants about the nature of Ramsar Regional Initiatives, which are a voluntary operational tool of the Convention on Wetlands to support the implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024 and to contribute to the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

14h30 The objectives of this workshop and its programme Gordana Beltram, chair MedWet, Slovenia
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GB ([MW-SP-attachment4-Medwet-objectives](#)) initially reminded participants of the two documents which were sent to the participants before the meeting:

- the “Background Paper” which summarizes what the MedWet Initiative has achieved and has been undertaking up to now.
- the “Brief Analysis” which summarizes the responses received to the questionnaires sent out to all MedWet members last summer.

Based on the two documents, an annotated agenda was prepared for the Strategic Planning meeting to guide the discussion, clarify certain issues and make a concrete proposal for the future work of MedWet to the Steering Group and the MedWetCom for adoption.

GB explained the working process. Participants were invited to work in smaller groups to discuss either in English or in French. Each group was asked to bring its conclusions back to plenary, to be discussed together and agreed, with the conclusions and recommendations to be submitted to the Steering Group for consideration.

Four working sessions have been defined to work on the following outputs:

- 1- Working session / Output 1: a list of the specific objectives that MedWet needs to address**
- 2- Working session / Output 2: a list of the key elements for MedWet work in 2018-2021 with realistic objectives and concrete cooperative projects**
- 3- Working session / Output 3: a proposal for the governance structure for the Regional Initiative**

4- Working session / Output 4: fundraising guidelines that identify adequate and realistic new funding sources

**15h15 Introduction session I: Why do we want an active MedWet network?
What does MedWet need to achieve that other networks cannot do?
Thymio Papayannis, honorary MedWet member & Paule Gros, MAVA Foundation**

Thymio Papayannis stressed that it was useful to look back on the past to consider the future. He recalled how thirty years ago there was a concern in the Mediterranean about the dramatic loss of wetlands. There were people who cared enough about it to endeavour to stop this degradation of wetlands, and he recalled how Luc Hoffmann was one of the most significant contributors to the Ramsar Convention through his scientific and strategic contributions.

He reminded participants of how governments such as Italy or Greece supported regional cooperation to curb wetland loss and supported the collaboration of governmental institutions with NGOs, the European Commission, wetlands centres and others. He recalled that the different activities during the early years (MedWet I project) were executed by groups with the formal support of the Ministries in France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

Then Paule Gros expressed the MAVA Foundation's support for the MedWet initiative. She emphasised that MedWet is unique as a platform ready for sharing information and technical capacities between institutions and civil society. This unique character of the MedWet network allows us to do things that other networks cannot do.

Another interesting aspect is that MedWet is an operational part of the Ramsar Convention and it offers a possibility to amplify national Ramsar work and successes at regional level. The MAVA Foundation also appreciates MedWet's contributions to its own Mediterranean Strategy to 2022. Funding to the MedWet Secretariat will not be renewed, but MAVA is ready to contribute funds to specific MedWet projects, such as the five projects already submitted for the 2017-2020 period.

The MedWet Secretariat is the lead partner in:

- Communication Campaign on the value of coastal wetlands (M3).

And a partner in four additional projects:

- Governance and stakeholder participation in coastal wetlands management (M3),
- Maristanis – Integrated management of Coastal and Marine Habitats of the Oristano Gulf (Sardinia) (M3),
- Conservation of the island wetlands of the Mediterranean Basin: MedIsWet (M3),
- Platform on water management and abstraction (M 1-2).

15h30 Working session / Output I: a list of the specific objectives that MedWet needs to address

→**What does MedWet need to achieve that other networks cannot do?**

The participants analysed how an organization such as MedWet, a regional network bringing together governments and key non-governmental organizations in the region, might be useful for improved conservation and the wise use of Mediterranean wetlands, and concluded the following:

Operational framework

- Focus on the period 2018-2022 with project financial support by the MAVA Foundation and (hopefully) from the EU.
- Establish a pragmatic implementation mechanism for maximal operational effectiveness.
- Focus on a few key objectives with high impact on wetland conservation and wise use as part of sustainable development in the Mediterranean (SDG/Agenda 2030).

Key strategic objectives

• **Visibility**

MedWet should interact more with other platforms and networks in the Mediterranean with common interests.

• **Opportunity**

MedWet should focus on sectors/issues where its members have expressed an interest and where MedWet can provide key contributions (e.g., climate change, ecosystem services, biodiversity, water management, etc.).

• **Cooperation**

- MedWet should strengthen and improve exchange of: National wetland inventories (covering all Ramsar wetlands types),
- Data and tools, transferring know-how through the MWO and STN,
- Standardization,
- Capacity building,
- Communication, and
- Cooperation between MedWet members.

**17h00 Introduction session 2:
Joint projects to be developed and executed under MedWet
Jean Jalbert, Tour du Valat Institute**

Jean Jalbert(JJ) recalled ([MW-SP-attachment5-Medwet-Projects](#)) the history of the projects that MedWet has developed since 1992. Then he presented the projects recently started and now in preparation, focusing on the five MAVA-funded projects and a new project concept for a network of Ramsar Site managers.

17h20 Working session / Output 2: a list of the key elements for MedWet work in 2018-2021 with realistic objectives and concrete cooperative projects

→What objectives should cooperative MedWet projects aim to achieve and which results do need theyto produce during the period 2018-2021?

If additional projects need to be developed by MedWet in the mid-term (2018-2022), clarify their focus, objectives and summarize briefly their activities.

List of the ongoing projects with MAVA Foundation support

- M3 communication campaign (MedWet lead)
- M3 Governance
- M3 Maristanis
- M3 Wetlands in Islands
- M3 Partnership for Water

Proposed key elements

- Create an information exchange mechanism between all MedWet members.
- Create a database of know-how and best practices related to wise use of Mediterranean wetlands.
- Establish and keep updated a databank of projects relevant for MedWet. Reactivate the Agadir Commitments and select key elements to be implemented during the next four years.
- Establish a network of Ramsar Site managers.
- Operationalise work on wetland inventories.

19h00 - Closure of the afternoon session

3 November – Morning Session 09h00 – 12h00

The second day started with a summary of the conclusions reached during the afternoon of the first day.

09h20 Working session / Output 3: a proposal for the governance structure for the regional initiative

→ **What structure does MedWet need?**

The session aimed at clarifying the most suitable governance structure for the effective management of the MedWet Initiative.

In the discussion, different views were expressed, particularly in relation to the need for a Coordinator and the Steering Group representation. The Steering Group needs to look into it as proposed:

Functions of the MedWet Secretariat

Most of the participants agreed on the need to recruit a new Coordinator to consolidate the MedWet team and the physical Secretariat. However, Italy expressed doubts on the need for a Coordinator and a physical Secretariat, mentioning that we should first consider the possibility that one or several MedWet member(s) is/are willing to play secretarial functions.

Taking into account these different views, the following principles were considered in reference to MedWet Secretariat:

- Key functions of the MedWet Secretariat are to animate the network, to facilitate and actively support information exchange, and to administer MedWet projects as specified in relevant agreements.
- The highest priority of the MedWet Secretariat is to (re)build regular and direct links with all MedWet members.
- We should explore the possibility of members to second staff to the MedWet Secretariat and /or to play secretarial functions.
- Provided a sufficient budget, the MedWet Secretariat also needs a Coordinator and permanent staff for key functions (communication, administration and finance, project support). Other staff can be hired on a consultancy basis.
- The Coordinator needs to work to increase regional cooperation and must have diplomatic skills to work with all members, to supervise project development and coordination, raise funds, and provide public expertise on wetland matters in the Mediterranean.
- MedWet should better identify and explore the role of non-governmental members of MedWet, give more attention to NGOs, people in the field, relevant to MedWet's goal (small NGOs in priority) and promote collaboration between governments, NGOs and any relevant local actors.
- The need and role of a new MedWet Coordinator should be defined by the Steering Group and endorsed by MedWet/Com.
- The Steering Group should first agree on the functions and then on the structural needs.

Steering Group

- The formal structure of the current Steering Group is relevant, but proves to be not functional due to unequal commitment of Steering Group members.

- There is a strong need to have more participation from countries, in order to create a better balance between the different types of Steering Group members.
- There is a need to explore the idea of sub-regional groups that could work on issues of shared common interest.
- There is also a need to ensure a clear distinction of the respective roles and direct cooperation between the Steering Group and the Secretariat.

National Focal Points

- The MedWet country members need to increase their ownership in MedWet, in particular through their participation in specific projects.
- Ramsar/MedWet National Focal Points often lack involvement, and their role needs to be better defined.
- The National Focal Point for the Ramsar Convention and for MedWet needs to be the same person.
- The NFPs should clarify with whom (NGOs, experts and institutions) they wish to work within their country, in order to contribute most to national wetland action plans and regional projects.

10h45 Working session / Output 4: fundraising guidelines that identify adequate and realistic new funding sources

→ **What financial means are needed to coordinate and govern MedWet?**

The session identified partners and financing institutions for MedWet, its coordination and projects. It aimed to clarify who are the partners that are likely to be willing to finance MedWet activities and funding instruments that MedWet needs to explore with a view of obtaining financial support for its core activities?

Financial needs to coordinate and govern MedWet

The cost of the core functions of the MedWet Secretariat amount to 250,000 euros per year.

The annual costs can be divided into the core budget (covered by country annual contributions, voluntary contributions, and in-kind country contributions), plus an additional budget that would be secured through projects overheads.

An idea was also evoked for rotating secretarial functions, voluntarily hosted for a limited period of time by a MedWet country; perhaps this could present an advantageous solution, based on experiences by other Mediterranean networks.

Countries' annual contributions

- The annual contributions by the MedWet countries should be clarified in an annex to the planned COP13 Resolution on Ramsar Regional Initiatives, based on the model used during COP8 (2002) and COP9 (2005). A MedWet Ramsar Contracting Party needs to provide text for such an annex as part of the procedure to develop COP13 Draft Resolutions (during Standing Committee meeting 54 in April 2018).

Public donors

- As a high priority, links with the European Commission need to be reinforced and MedWet projects submitted to obtain EU funds.
- Other multilateral donor organisations should be explored, such as the Green Climate Fund, GEF (particularly small grants programme), and the French FFEM.

Private donors

- MedWet should agree on a “black list” of companies / donors incompatible with MedWet values.
- MAVIA can help in facilitating access to private donors, based on clear, simple and focused MedWet proposal concepts. There might be companies/donors who do not comply with Ramsar Resolution XI.20, and they could be put on a “black list” of companies not to contact.

Final questions to the participants

At the end of the four working sessions, GB asked the participants to respond to the following questions:

- 1 – What could make MedWet more visible, better recognized, interesting and attractive?
- 2 – Where has MedWet the best opportunity to contribute?
- 3 – Cooperation / communication – where to start?
- 4 – What can I contribute best to MedWet?

Summary of answers to these questions

Much has already been expressed in the questionnaire, but some of the short answers provided on the spot are included here:

1 - What could make MedWet more visible, better recognized, interesting and attractive?

- Work on pilot demonstration cases, practical ones responding to the needs of MedWet members
- Establish a MedWet small grants fund (20-40 K€) to support visible and short duration projects.
- Better links, clearly explained, with Ramsar.
- Mediterranean Wetland Observatory.
- Participation in important platforms and partnerships with organisations in the Mediterranean
- Productions: data, tools, ecosystem services, etc.
- Website links on the platforms.
- Implementing more projects at the regional level.
- Establish a clear legal status for the Initiative and provide, accordingly, a reliable and stable financial framework.

2 - Where has MedWet the best opportunity to contribute?

- Replicate what works in some countries/wetlands in other countries and at other wetlands where applicable.
- Amplify the message from the wetland sites at the Mediterranean basin level: communication, advocacy, policy, influence (through proposals, not campaigning).
- Increase and widen linkages with cities, NGOs and universities.
- Develop climate change programmes.

- Establish operational wetland inventory at the national and international level and use the inventory, as the basic knowledge on the Mediterranean wetland.
- Focus on all issues related to the direct management of wetlands site, including cultural aspects.

3 - Cooperation/communication – where to start?

- Assess of the MedWet members' needs.
- Increase the implication of national NGOs in working with national actors (governments, research, institutions etc.).
- Pinpoint a common and relatively simple and achievable goal amongst the needs expressed as the meaningful/impactful low-hanging fruit.
- Promote face to face training and exchanges of experience and know-how meeting (e.g., training in Spain).
- Expression of what each could contribute.
- Organize MedWet side events during Ramsar COPI3 on Med issues (e.g. ,Med Islands Wetlands, Cities & wetlands, AVITEM project, etc.), all with Arabic interpretation; some issue in relation to the interpretive and tourist cartography of Mediterranean wetlands.
- Plan for a MedWet as a side event at the CBD COP in Egypt.
- Work together on a proposal for a serial World Heritage(UNESCO) property site with wetland sites in different Mediterranean countries, in the name of MedWet (e.g., Mediterranean migratory birds route, Mediterranean Roman salt pans, Mediterranean wetland water management traditional knowledge, Mediterranean wetland gastronomy knowledge, etc.).
- Develop exchanges of tools, experiences (technical items) on a website.
- Develop a communication strategy between MedWet, Ramsar, and other relevant conventions
- Develop a 'MedWet Day', for example, used to increase the MedWet communication.

4 - On what can I contribute best?

- Give visibility to MedWet within the donors circle.
- Capacity building activities for NGOs and technicians dealing with wetlands.
- Communication campaigns addressed to the general public.
- Provide opportunities for fundraising.
- As a MedWet ambassador improving relations with MedWet members and related organisations.

<p>12h00 Conclusions Gordana Beltram, chair MedWet, Slovenia</p>

- The meeting clearly showed that MedWet needs to continue with an adequate structure to make it more efficient and effective. Some key ideas were particularly stressed.

- Financial means should be identified in the medium term to make it stable and operational,
- Interactions with relevant actors working in the region should be developed,
- National Focal Points and country involvement should be strengthened (perhaps first an investigation should be led into how much time the NFP can spend on MedWet items out of their mission),
- Different but complementary approaches should be used,
- Milestones and an emergency plan should be considered.

“We want to have MedWet, but we need to be much more focused and organized.”

“We want MedWet to interact more with other actors in the Mediterranean.”

“To have MedWet, we need organized reliable and stable organization and framework.”

- MedWet should consider taking opportunities to engage on projects related to climate change, as appropriate.

- MedWet must facilitate members working more together. The preparation of COP13 should provide a good opportunity to strengthen the channels of communication with the members: sharing experiences, presenting good examples for different countries / members.
- Concerning MedWet structure: the participants recognize the importance of working to mobilize all members to actively contribute to the common programme.
- The Steering Group has to agree on milestones and procedures between now and October 2018 (MedWet/Com). A similar short planning meeting could support this goal, possibly back to back with a project meeting in spring 2018. MedWet countries should be invited to host such a meeting on the way to COP13.
- MedWet needs to work on the ground, and strengthen collaboration.

“It is our responsibility to make MedWet great (again)!”