



MedWet

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

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From MedWet/Com13 to MedWet/Com14
Activity Report

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1 Introduction

MedWet is the Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Mediterranean region and today its membership consists of 27 Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention, Palestine, Tour du Valat, IUCN-MED and WWF. The core of MedWet's added value is networking among the Mediterranean wetland stakeholders and communicating and disseminating scientific results, management, and policy challenges. The original governance system, where States, international organizations, NGOs and wetland centers have an equal voice, is one of MedWet's strengths. This asset should be maintained and reinforced. There is a need to continue increasing visibility and international leadership of MedWet in wetland conservation related-issues.

The present Activity Report is intended to give members of the MedWet/an overview of MedWet activities since the MedWet/Com13, held in Dubai in October 2018 to the MedWet/Com14 which will be held virtually on the 23rd and 24th of February 2021. The present Activity Report covers a period of 2 years: 2019 and 2020. Since October 2018, the major developments of MedWet can be summarised as follows:

- Dr. Alessio Satta was selected as Coordinator of MedWet and he began his functions on March 2019.
- As decided in the MedWet/Com13, the new ToR of MedWet has been prepared and ready for the approval of the MedWet/Com14
- The role of MedWet in the MAVA Foundation's Mediterranean Strategy 2017-2022 has been confirmed with the approval of the Second Phase of the M3 Programme.
- MedWet has reinforced its policy and advocacy impact initiating collaboration with the Union for the Mediterranean and the UNEP/MAP Secretariat.
- MedWet organised a public meeting on "the role of Tunisia in the challenge of preserving Mediterranean wetlands" on 12 July 2019 in Tunis (Tunisia). The event was organised in collaboration with the General Directorate of Forests (DGF) of Tunisia, WWF North Africa and the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory (MWO).
- The Mediterranean Ramsar sites Managers Network has come to light and is rapidly developing thanks to the support of the Members
- MedWet has been granted by the Interreg MED with the project "Tune-Up" and has submitted two proposals at the new Call Horizon Green Deal.

The work on the revision of the Terms of Reference of the MedWet Initiative concludes the issues related to the "legal status" in compliance with the decisions of MedWet / Com12 in Paris which led to the adoption of Resolution XIII.9 on RRI by COP13 (Dubai, October 2018). The most compelling objective was to make the new ToR compliant with the principles listed in paragraph 8 of the Resolution XIII.9 on Ramsar Regional Initiatives 2019-2021, and the 'Operational Guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives to support the implementation of the Convention' (Revised Operational Guidelines 2016-18), adopted by the Ramsar Convention Standing Committee with Decision SC52-16 (28 July 2016). The new version of the ToR therefore allows to fully achieve this objective in order to maintain the formal recognition of MedWet as RRI and to have an appropriate legal arrangement of the Initiative within the framework of the Ramsar Convention.

The Activity Report presents in greater detail the work done by the MedWet Initiative in the past two years. The Report consists in the following parts:

1. Follow up of the MedWet/Com13 with a specific focus on the preparation of the new ToR of MedWet
2. Assessment of the activities planned on the Strategic Work Plan 2019-2021 as approved in Dubai

2 MedWet tasks since MedWet/Com 13

There were three main tasks for the MedWet Secretariat for the period 2019-2021, as defined in Dubai during the MedWet/Com 13:

1. Consolidating the role of MedWet in the Mediterranean
2. Drafting the new ToR of the Initiative
3. Implementing the Strategic Work Plan 2019-2021

Regarding the first objective, in this 2-years period, MedWet has implemented the following activities:

- Enhanced its communication impact (website, presence on social media, newsletter, events, World Wetlands Day, training);
- Launched and enlarged the Mediterranean Ramsar Sites Manager Network (MeRSiM-Net);
- Joined the Mediterranean Biodiversity Consortium establishing new synergies with regional and international partners in the Mediterranean;
- Developed and participated to several EU-funded projects.

The other two relevant tasks are presented in the following paragraphs.

3 Drafting the new ToR

During the last two years, the MedWet/SG has been particularly involved in the drafting of the new ToR of the MedWet Initiative. The MedWet/SG had regular meetings (formal and informal) and exchanges among them, as well as with the MedWet Secretariat and the legal advisor, Ms Daniela Addis.

During the MedWet/Com12 in Paris, the former Coordinator raised concerns about the legal status of MedWet. The MedWet/Com, having analysed the different options for developing and obtaining a legal status for the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative, concluded that the best option was related to an appropriate type of arrangement within the framework of the Ramsar Convention. In this sense, the MedWet/Com12 drafted a decision inviting the Ramsar Standing Committee to apply the following steps:

- a) to study options for providing legal coverage to well-established Ramsar Regional Initiatives, such as MedWet, as part of the arrangements for the implementation of the Ramsar Convention;
- b) to consider possible arrangements for the operation of the secretariats of well-established Ramsar Regional Initiatives; and
- c) to submit a draft Resolution on this matter to the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention.

These issues were taken up by the Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention and resulted in the “Draft resolution on Ramsar Regional Initiatives 2019-2021 and their Operational Framework” (Ramsar COP13 Doc. 18.8), submitted to COP13 for adoption.

Following the 12th MedWet / Com meeting, the Contracting Parties and the Ramsar Secretariat worked to prepare Resolution XIII.9 which was approved at Ramsar COP13 in Dubai in October 2018. Subsequently the MedWet Coordinator and MedWet / SG (with the support of the legal

advisor) proceeded to update the Terms of Reference of the MedWet Initiative to make them consistent with the indications of Resolution XIII.9.

At the MedWet/Com13, the Steering Group was asked to draft a revised version of the Terms of Reference of the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet), in particular to provide, for the next MedWet/Com 14, a proposal for a legal revision of the current Terms of Reference (ToR) and Rules of Procedure (RoP) as approved by the MedWet/Com12 in Paris.

In order to complete this task, the MedWet/SG referred to and analysed the MedWet fundamental legal texts (the Statute of the MedWet Secretariat Association revised on September 19, 2016; the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedures approved by the MedWet/Com12 in Paris), and the Report and decisions of the 13th Meeting of the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com 13 Dubai (UAE), 21 – 28 October 2018); as well as the relevant legal texts of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the related Recommendations and Resolutions of the Conference of the Parties and

Standing Committee Decisions (SC Decisions), set out in Annex I to the Decision.

Therefore, the ToR and accordingly the RoP have been redrafted, duly taking into account all the comments made and the decisions adopted during the online meetings of the SG. The main conclusion regards the structure and the adoption of the amended version of the ToR and RoP through a specific Decision to be adopted by MedWet/Com 14.

In this context, based upon the comments and proposed amendments made by MedWet/Com a final and amended version of the ToR and the related RoP was prepared (DocMWC14-02) according to the following indications:

a) Compliance with the principles listed in paragraph 8 of the Resolution XIII.9 on Ramsar Regional Initiatives 2019-2021 (COPI3, 21-29 October 2018), and the 'Operational Guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives to support the implementation of the Convention' (Revised Operational Guidelines 2016-18), adopted by the Ramsar Convention Standing Committee with Decision SC52-16 (28 July 2016), which remain valid, provided by the resolution on RRI in order to maintain the formal recognition as RRI;

b) Reformulation of the ToRs and accordingly the RoP, in order to include the comments expressed by MedWet components regarding the following crucial points:

1. Membership. It has been further defined the status of membership of the subjects belonging to MedWet, considering the key issues of admission, suspension, rescission and withdrawal.

2. Financing mechanisms. The membership fee criteria of calculation have been defined in principle (the fee of country and non-country members), setting a minimum equal fee for all members, based on the UN criteria for countries contributions.

3. Decision-making processes. The amendments on decision-making tend to clarify and simplify the process, especially regarding voting (consensus and majorities) as well as modalities of meetings (face-to-face meetings vs online meetings).

c) Rationalization, simplification and reorganization of the ToR and RoP reflecting the content and using legal wording according to the Ramsar Convention and the IUCN framework. New parts - such as the figure of the Vice-Chair of the MedWet/SG in RoP Rules 11 and 23 - have been added as well.

4 Implementing the Strategic Work Plan 2019-2021

The last two years have been a period of great improvement for MedWet with the recruitment of the Coordinator and new staff to reinforce the capacity of the Secretariat to build and coordinate the Ramsar sites network, ensure communication and policy activities, facilitate and actively support information exchange among members and partners, and to manage MedWet projects as specified in relevant agreements.

The main objective of MedWet in this period has been the implementation of the Strategic Work Plan 2019-2021. Other specific objectives related to the main objective have been to:

- a) Consolidate the profile of MedWet in the Mediterranean biodiversity conservation arena;
- b) Further develop the ownership and involvement of the member countries' Focal Points in MedWet governance and activities;
- c) Raise additional funds through project development in order to strengthen the future of MedWet;

In these months, the Secretariat is fully engaged in participating to the creation of the Mediterranean Biodiversity Consortium promoted by the French Conservatoire du Littoral and involving IUCN MED, Tour du Valat, AIFM (Association Internationale des Forêts Méditerranéennes), Med-PAN (Mediterranean Protected Areas Network) and PIM (Initiative pour les Petites Îles en Méditerranée). The partners would like to take advantage of their individual identity, background, technical expertise, networks and reputation to build up a Consortium based on multi-biomes approach (wetlands, small islands, forest, sea, coast...). They recognize the great challenges that biodiversity is facing all around the Mediterranean basin, that cannot be tackled by individual organizations acting alone. They also wish to increase the visibility of the Mediterranean biodiversity role in inter-connected continents such as Africa, Europe and Asia. They consider that the region, due to its socio economics and geographic features, could be an excellent arena to test innovative and transformative biodiversity projects and replicate them in other world regions. Partners are also aware that they are funded (at least partially) by the same public and private donors. Therefore, the partners are willing to work together to overcome this potential threat to make an opportunity. The partners will sign a first MoU on March 2021.

A narrative description of the preliminary achievements of the Strategic Work Plan 2019-2021 in the past biennium is presented for the following categories: 1) communication; 2) networking; 3) capacity building; and 4) project development. A specific focus is dedicated to the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory (MWO).

Moreover, a more detailed assessment of the achievement of each activity of the SWP 2010-2021 is presented in par. 4.2. The activities described reflect the results and the lessons learned from the past and, in some cases, represent a follow-up of previous activities.

4.1 Narrative description

Communication

The MedWet communications impact has been improved and MedWet is more and more active in social media and through its website. The Arabic version of the website and social medias (Facebook and Twitter) has been very successful. The design and production of these new tools was undertaken in 2018.

The Secretariat has continued to ensure the right mix of information being delivered to further raise awareness about: a) wetland values and functions and b) existing policies and tools for the

conservation, restoration and effective management of these ecosystems. Publications are shared on the website and social media: guidelines, factsheets, policy briefs and syntheses from the Ramsar Convention, the MWO and the STN; and projects are updated with lessons learnt from all partners and in particular those from the M3 Programme on Coastal Wetlands Conservation funded by MAVA.

Networking

The Mediterranean Network of Ramsar Site Managers has been launched with the adhesion of almost 30 Ramsar sites and the creation of the Network website: www.medwetmanagers.net.

The Network provides concrete motivation for individuals and/or institutions involved in the management of the Ramsar Sites. The consolidation of such a huge network represents a great opportunity for MedWet to increase its specific weight and its power of dialogue and pressure towards other institutions and donors.

MedWet has also reinforced its local and national NGOs wetland network, promoting the WWD activities; through the financial support of the French Biodiversity Office.

Capacity Building

The Secretariat has created the MedWet Academy Programme. The scope of the MedWet Academy is to build a strong community of wetlands' managers in the Mediterranean region. The Academy aims to reinforce managers' capacity to ensure wetland conservation and sustainable use of wetland resources. Our expectation is to bring about positive change both within and across Ramsar sites to increase their sustainability and impact. The MedWet Academy will represent the training center of the Mediterranean Ramsar Sites Manager Network.

In the period 2021-2022, thanks to the financial support of MAVA, the capacity-building programme foresees the delivery of more than 10 dedicated webinars per year for wetland managers broadcasted through online channels. Webinars, held by top scientists and experts on wetland-related issues from the Mediterranean region, will cover key areas where there is a need to improve the knowledge and managerial capacity related to wetland conservation and sustainable use. Different methodologies for monitoring and managing wetlands with examples on the ground will be presented. Each session will start with a presentation from an expert who will give an overview of the more recent successful and innovative practices being used in the Mediterranean, for a sustainable use and conservation of wetlands. The delivery of webinars intends to ensure a maximum background of expertise and knowledge on broad matters/topics related to wetlands, in order to increase awareness on the complexity of interactions between natural systems and society as well as to provide recommendations on wetland governance for Mediterranean wetland-managers.

Project development

The priority has been put on securing funds through projects focused on the core functions of the MedWet Secretariat. Follows the list of the projects funded so far.

1. **Communicating and advocating to reduce water abstraction and detrimental coastal development in Mediterranean coastal wetlands** (M3 Programme funded by MAVA). Building on the work done and the lessons learnt during phase 1 of M3, the communications and policy work during phase 2 will contribute to the project's objectives of reducing significantly the impacts of water abstraction and coastal development on Mediterranean coastal wetlands, by ensuring that: the climate crisis scenario in the Mediterranean region is known and understood by governments and decision-makers (at local, regional and EU levels); the impacts of current coastal development and activities that favour unsustainable water abstraction are known and understood by decisions makers – wherever possible - reduced/stopped; solutions to the crisis, such as Nature-based Solutions, are understood, supported and promoted by decision-makers; Nature-based solutions are implemented on the ground; national, regional and EU institutions adopt policy measures to ensure restoration of Mediterranean coastal wetlands, reduction of water abstraction and

control of coastal development. The above-described objectives will be led by MedWet and reached by guaranteeing a much stronger integration of policy and communications activities at an overarching level and between all partners and by strengthening the bond between overarching level and the project demonstration sites which will provide concrete cases and stories to explain / show decision-makers the way forward.

2. **Tune-Up (Interreg MED programme).** TUNE UP is a multi-module project tackling the need for a strategic and collaborative approach to Med MPAs management and biodiversity protection, by testing and capitalizing a multi-stakeholder/multi-level governance tool based on River/Wetland Contracts experience tested by the INTERREG MED WETNET project. TUNE UP builds on WETNET results exploiting the flexibility and feasibility of the River/Wetland Contract methodology further developing it to MPAs management, assessing its effectiveness through the implementation of 10 MPA Contracts. MedWet plays a transversal role and is responsible for capitalisation activities. The main objectives of the Capitalization strategy on which MedWet is currently working are: further implementing the wikisource of good practices on coastal governance, by adding a section on MPA governance; mainstreaming the MPA Contract into regional policies by: (i) developing 10 key governance plans to support regional authorities of TUNE UP area in embedding the tool into their strategies and regulations; (ii) organizing Capacity building seminars; (iii) involving Regional authorities and MPAs managers in the subscription of a MoU to uptake the tool; coordinating with Horizontal project PANACEA; promoting the embedding of MPA Contracts at Med level, through a set of Political Recommendations to be delivered to the EC and to Regional authorities of the programme area; and capitalizing the project results at Med and international level, by organizing seminars.

The Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory

This activity is ensured by the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory which objectives are:

- To analyse the status and trends of Mediterranean wetlands, their biodiversity, the goods and services they provide, as well as the anthropogenic factors that explain these trends.
- To promote effective decision-making for the protection and sustainable use of Mediterranean wetlands.

The MWO is a “science-policy” platform follows the status of and the trends in Mediterranean Wetlands in order to improve policy decisions. Thus, the MWO is a privileged tool for the Med-Wet countries. It works on several levels – local, national and regional –throughout the Mediterranean basin. Its approach consists of preparing reports on the state and trends of Mediterranean wetlands, on the basis of its own scientific research and summaries of published information. The MWO also develops indicators on biodiversity, water, goods and services provided by wetlands, pressures exerted on them, and societies’ responses to wetland degradation.

In MWO is currently involved in the following activities:

- The publication of the Living Mediterranean Report which, based on a new analysis of the Living Planet Index and the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, will provide an updated picture of the state of biodiversity in the Mediterranean hotspot and its trends since the adoption of the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- The supervision of a PhD thesis on the needs to adapt the network of protected areas in Mediterranean countries to take into account the impact of climate change, sea level rise and land-use on biodiversity, particularly water birds.
- The publication of a report on the evolution of land-use in more than 300 wetlands in the Mediterranean basin between 2005 and 2018 and the identification of the causes of losses.
- The adjustment of our research axes and our set of indicators to the new international objectives for the protection of biodiversity, wetlands and the fight against climate change.

4.2 Assessment of activities achievement

To better assess the progress of the SWP 2019-2021, a focused assessment of the level of implementation of the various activities was introduced. The following possible levels of achievement were therefore considered:

- **Achieved:** the activity is completed, and the result successfully achieved
- **Partially achieved:** the activity has started but not yet fully achieved
- **Ongoing:** the activity is ongoing and will be very likely be achieved before the end of 2021
- **Not achieved:** the activity was not achieved

Strategic Goal 1: Addressing the drivers of Mediterranean wetlands loss and degradation			
Activity Number	Activity	Status of achievement	Comments
1.1	Developing and implementing a training programme and organizing training sessions for national and local government officials on wetland services	Achieved	Several workshops on the application of TESSA method to wetlands Number of people trained
1.2	Increasing the knowledge base and awareness of ecosystem services and values of the Buna Delta	Achieved	Activity carried out in collaboration with IUCN ECARO the framework of the “Buna Delta Protection” project in Albania. Ecosystem services valuation study in BRVPL; updated map with habitats developed
1.3	Improving the sustainability of water use in the wetlands of the Gulf of Oristano through an integrated management approach	Achieved	Activity carried out in collaboration with MedSea in the framework of the MARISTANIS project. Concrete measures to reduce water consumption have been tested and disseminated.
Strategic Goal 2: Effectively conserving and managing the Ramsar Site network			
Activity Number	Activity	Status of achievement	Comments
2.1	Planning and management of some pilot Ramsar Sites representative of contexts: an island site in an EU country; a transboundary site between two European countries not part of the EU; and another site located in North Africa	Partially Achieved	Activity carried out within the M3 Programme of MAVA on coastal wetlands. Number of management plans prepared and/or updated
2.2	Establishing and coordinating the MedWet Network of Mediterranean Ramsar Sites Managers (MeRSiM-Net)	Partially achieved	30 members... Network established with 50 members by the end of 2021 Number of members involved
2.3	Defining a coordination group of Mediterranean regions committed to wetland conservation	On going	The MW Secretariat will support the member countries to select “committed regions”
2.4	Enabling a multi-stakeholder governance and transboundary mechanism to address the key threats and support knowledge transfer and joint planning of the Buna Delta	Partially achieved	Action plan for addressing the priority issues Stakeholders from both Montenegro and Albania The MW Secretariat will support partners in exploring possibilities for and initiate transboundary cooperation in the Bojana/Buna Delta
2.5	Develop an advocacy campaign and legal action to enable protection of Ulcinj Salina	Achieved	Value and threat of Ulcinj Salina are known nationally & internationally By end of 2020 the management plan of the wetland area prepared
Strategic Goal 3: Wisely using all wetlands			
Activity Number	Activity	Status of achievement	Comments

3.1	Producing an overview of national wetland inventories in the Mediterranean	Achieved	The MedWet/STN Specialist Group "Inventories" prepares the report on and evaluation of the status of Mediterranean wetlands inventories Report prepared, published and widely circulated
3.2	Producing and disseminating a methodological guide for wetland inventorying	Partially Achieved	The MedWet/STN Specialist Group "Inventories" as prepared a brief that will be disseminated by the MW/Secretariat
3.3	Mediterranean island wetlands inventoried and adequately documented	Achieved	The activity has been carried out in the framework of the MedIsWet project with the coordination of WWF Greece, https://sites.google.com/view/mediswet/activities/inventoryMediterraneanIslandWetlandsinventoriedby2022
3.4	Promoting and supporting the Ramsar Cities Accreditation and promoting the cities already certified	On going	The Ramsar Cities Accreditation has been promoted through the MedWet Network and through the WWD19 and WWD20
3.5	Enhancing and promoting intangible and tangible cultural heritage of wetlands	On going	As part of the work carried out under the MedWet Culture Network, MedINA is undertaking a survey, of local communities' practices that are ensuring the effective wise use of wetland heritage.
3.6	Evaluating socioeconomic values of coastal wetlands and marine-related habitats	On going	Socioeconomic valuation of coastal wetlands and marine-related habitats is on going in the M3 Project and concerns several sites.
3.7	Producing a guide for the use of wetlands as nature-based solutions to mitigate extreme events	Achieved	The outcome is available here: https://medwet.org/publications/policy-paper-nbs-outs-smart-climate-change/

Operational Goal 4: Enhancing Implementation

Activity Number	Main Activities	Status of achievement	Comments
4.1	Coordinating and reinforcing the MedWet/Scientific and Technical Network (STN)	Partially achieved	The STN has produced a technical note on environmental water requirements of wetlands in the Mediterranean that can be found here: https://medwet.org/publications/briefing-note-environmental-water-requirements-of-wetlands-in-the-mediterranean/
4.2	The Mediterranean Wetland Observatory (MWO) publishing regularly the status and trends of Mediterranean wetlands based on reliable indicators	On going	The MWO is working on a report on the evolution of land-use in more than 300 wetlands in the Mediterranean basin between 2005 and 2018 and the identification of the causes of losses.
4.3	Communicating MedWet activities and in a broader way Mediterranean wetland news and initiatives to members, decision makers and other key stakeholders	On going	A Monthly newsletter is delivered to more than one thousand addresses.
4.4	Designing and producing communications tools for MedWet	On going	Several infographics (eg WWD) and other communication tool have been produced and promoted.
4.5	Promoting a more active celebration of the WORLD WETLANDS DAY in the MedWet countries	On going	2019 and 2020 editions have been successfully... 2021 in preparation...
4.6	Maintain the MedWet website as an important tool for communicating the value of the Mediterranean wetlands	On going	Website constantly updated
4.7	Reinforcing the presence in social media presence	On going	Particularly relevant in this sense the MedWet Facebook page in Arabic with almost 4000 followers
4.8	Developing, in cooperation with regional and national partners, a fundraising action for ensuring the complete implementation of the	Partially Achieved	MedWet has joined the Mediterranean Biodiversity Consortium that is applying to a direct fund from the AFD (Agence Francaise du Developpement) et le FFEM (Fonds Francais pour l'Environnement Mondial).

	Framework for Action		
4.9	Defining and delivering a 3-years capacity building program dedicated to wetland managers	Partially Achieved	In the period 2021-2022, thanks to the financial support of MAVA, the capacity-building programme foresees the delivery of more than 10 dedicated webinars per year for wetland managers broadcasted through online channels

5 Conclusions

The following conclusions on the past period can be drafted:

- MedWet is once again active and positively perceived by the Mediterranean partners as a reliable organization that has been in existence for more than 20 years and is operational in the region
- MedWet has developed active communications with renovated, reliable communication tools and a dedicated team
- MedWet is identified as the regional leader for communication, policy and networking on Mediterranean wetlands
- MedWet is actively involved in the project “Enhancing the conservation of coastal wetlands in the Mediterranean Basin”, funded by MAVVA, which has been recently labelled by the Union for the Mediterranean (<https://ufmsecretariat.org/project/enhancing-conservation-coastal-wetlands-mediterranean-basin/>)
- MedWet has developed a relevant policy and advocacy impact towards the European Commission, the Union for the Mediterranean and the Barcelona Convention
- Networking has also been greatly improved with the launch of the MedWet Scientific and Technical Network and the development of the MedWet Culture Network
- Finally, remarkable progress has been made by the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory

The financial sustainability of MedWet is not yet assured. MedWet cannot only work with contributions from countries, above all because these are irregular and, as happened in the last years, important contributions have been missing (e.g., Italy). The development of new project proposals to participate to forthcoming Call for Grants is needed. The current contribution guaranteed each year by the countries makes it possible to participate to these Calls for European projects, guaranteeing the share of co-financing, and thus potentially multiplying the available resources.