



WE GO COOP

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



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WE GO COOP

improving WEtland GOvernance through a COmmunity Of Practice

Euro-MED0200864

Programme priority: *Greener MED*

Specific objective: *RSO2.7 Enhancing protection and
preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure,
including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution*

Project mission: *Protecting, restoring and valorising the natural
environment and heritage*

Project category: *Transfer project (Thematic Project)*

Memorandum of Understanding

for the establishment of a

Mediterranean Community of Practice on Wetland Contracts

**Project Partner in charge: MedWet
With contributions from all Project Partners**



PREAMBLE

WHEREAS

The WEGOCOOP project, funded by the Interreg Euro-MED 2021-2027 program and running from 2024 to 2025, aims to strengthen the sustainable management of wetlands throughout the Mediterranean region by recognizing, consolidating, and further promoting Wetland Contracts as good governance practices and public and social innovation.

The WEGOCOOP project partners include: ANATOLIKI S.A. (Greece) as lead partner and, in alphabetic order, Association Secrétariat MedWet (France), FAMP - Andalusian Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (Spain), PPNEA - Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania (Albania), Public Institution Nature Park Vransko jezero (Croatia), RCDI - Development and Innovation Network (Portugal), Roma Tre University, Department of Architecture (Italy).

The WEGOCOOP project is a thematic initiative under the umbrella of the Natural Heritage Mission of the Interreg Euro-MED Programme 2021-2027, contributing to the protection, restoration and valorisation of the natural resources of the Euro-Mediterranean area.

RECOGNIZING THAT

Wetlands are vital ecosystems for biodiversity, climate regulation, water security and the wellbeing of Mediterranean human populations. Despite being severely threatened, they support biodiversity by providing habitats for numerous, often threatened, species; they regulate local and regional climates and act as carbon sinks, storing carbon and slowing global warming; they play a role in water regulation, acting as natural sponges absorbing water during storm event and slowly releasing it. Wetlands also sustain fisheries, agriculture, tourism, and cultural services. Their sustainable management depends on robust governance, grounded in the active participation of local communities and shared strategies balancing diverse interests.

NOTING THAT

Mediterranean wetlands face increasing pressures from climate change, pollution, and urbanization. A 20% loss of monitored natural wetlands has been reported since 1990, mainly due to agriculture, urbanization, and infrastructure (The Mediterranean Wetlands Outlook 3, 2025). Rising sea levels threaten coastal wetlands, while loss of biodiversity and ecological functions is accelerating.

The need to promote new models of management places good governance as a key element to remove obstacles, encourage coordinated action, and ensure the participation of all stakeholders. Wetland Contracts can strengthen governance at local level, through citizen participation, recognition of the services provided by local ecosystems, shared vision, commitment, and accountability.



TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THAT

International frameworks such as the Ramsar Convention (1971), the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, and the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) emphasize integrated, participatory, and multi-level approaches. EU directives and policies (including Water Framework Directive, Floods Directive, Marine Strategy, Birds Directive, Habitats Directive, Nature Restoration Regulation, Water Resilience Strategy and The Pact for the Mediterranean) also highlight governance as a strategic tool for wetland management, requiring the engagement of communities and stakeholders.

According to the Ramsar Convention, wetlands are understood to include rivers, lakes, lagoons, coastal marine waters, and other aquatic ecosystems, together with the territories connected to them.

CONSIDERING THAT

Wetland Contracts are governance instruments, established as voluntary agreements among public authorities, communities, NGOs, and other actors at local level. They foster participatory, cooperative, and sustainable wetland management, combining environmental protection with socio-economic development.

NOTING FURTHER THAT

Since the 1980s, Wetland Contracts have been widely developed in France and Italy, and through EU funding extended to other Mediterranean countries. Successful cases demonstrate their ability to balance conservation with local development. Experiences have also expanded in Belgium and beyond Europe, notably in Lebanon, Morocco, Burkina Faso, Moldova, and Canada, proving their adaptability to diverse contexts.

CONSIDERING THAT

The WEGOCOOP project actively promotes Wetland Contracts, consolidating decades of Mediterranean experience while amplifying knowledge-sharing.

ACKNOWLEDGING THAT

The undersigned parties commit to advancing collaborative and multi-stakeholder approaches to formalize a Mediterranean Community of Practice on Wetland Contracts.



NOW, THEREFORE, the parties of this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) agree as follows.

Article 1 - Scope of the Community of Practice (why?)

The Mediterranean Community of Practice (CoP) on Wetland Contracts is established as an informal network, without legal personality, based on voluntary participation and without financial obligations, aiming to strengthen the implementation of the Wetland Contract as a collaborative, multilevel, and multi-stakeholder tool that is framed within public and social innovation to facilitate good local governance with improved commitment of relevant local actors.

The CoP main objectives are to:

- network actors and organizations that are directly involved in, or otherwise interested in, the development and application of the Wetland Contract, fostering dialogue, synergies, knowledge sharing and long-term collaboration;
- connect Wetland Contract experiences, including sites and territories that are developing or implementing the instrument, in order to exchange methodologies and practical solutions;
- foster the replicability and transferability of the Wetland Contract model to new contexts and sites;
- promote the Wetland Contract as a key and proactive instrument in advancing biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation, combating desertification, water resilience and broader sustainable development goals;
- relate the Wetland Contract instrument to the broader range of environmental governance tools.

Article 2 - Involvement in the Community of Practice (who?)

The Community of Practice is open to the participation of any individual, institution or organization, public or private, that has experience in wetland governance or is otherwise interested in wetlands and their sustainable management. This includes, but is not limited to:

- public authorities at local, regional, national, and international levels;
- research institutions and academia;
- legal entities (registered organizations that operate within an institutional framework, having their own legal personality and specific activities);
- non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society groups;
- protected area managers and technical agencies;
- private sector representatives engaged in sustainable wetland-related activities;
- international and intergovernmental organizations.

All members are encouraged to participate, share their expertise, and collaborate in good faith to achieve the CoP's objectives as defined in Article 1.



Article 3 - Functioning of the Community of Practice (how?)

The Community of Practice as defined in article 1 exists as a flexible, voluntary, and non-binding framework, based on principles of inclusiveness, transparency, and mutual respect. Decisions within any of the bodies below are taken by consensus whenever possible, ensuring participation of all members. The operational functioning of these bodies may be further regulated through subsequent implementing rules or regulations by the CoP Steering Committee as needed.

General Members | Composed of all members of the CoP, who join voluntarily by completing a membership form. The widest possible participation to CoP is ensured, enabling the exchange of experiences, skills, and knowledge amongst members. Members may withdraw their participation in the CoP at any time by providing written notice to the Steering Committee.

Steering Committee | Comprised of a limited core group of legal entities, represented by their own legal representative and/or one or more formal delegates (in any case only one representative per organization has the power of decision), responsible for ensuring the proper functioning of the CoP, including membership management and verifying that the activities promoted according to Article 4 are consistent with the objectives outlined in Article 1. Members of the Steering Committee are defined on a voluntary basis and are based in a Mediterranean country and/or dealing with the Mediterranean. Participation in the Steering Committee does not entail any financial obligations for the organization involved. Members serve a three-year term.

The first members of the Steering Committee are hereby designated to facilitate the initial development and structuring of the CoP: ANATOLIKI S.A. (Greece); Association Secrétariat MedWet (France); FAMP - Andalusian Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (Spain); PPNEA - Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania (Albania); Public Institution Nature Park Vransko jezero (Croatia); RCDI - Development and Innovation Network (Portugal); Roma Tre University, Department of Architecture (Italy).

The Steering Committee may nominate an individual with relevant expertise as "coordinator" to whom it will delegate activities to support the Committee in managing the CoP, including membership, continuity, documentation, communication, and operational follow-up. The Committee may also acknowledge one or more "facilitators," drawn from the CoP, to provide technical and operational support to the coordinator.

The management of data related to membership will be done in accordance with the current privacy regulations applicable in the countries concerned.

Ensuring coordination with the Interreg Euro-MED 2021–2027 Natural Heritage Mission initiatives is a priority to effectively support the functioning of the CoP.

Article 4 - Initiatives of the Community of Practice (what?)



The Community of Practice shall promote and implement initiatives aimed at supporting the development, facilitation, implementation, and dissemination of Wetland Contracts. Initiatives are divided into key activities and optional activities that may be proposed and implemented by individual members.

Key activities | The following activities will be implemented as core commitments of the CoP:

- organization of at least one online annual meeting of the Steering Committee and General Members, ensuring the widest possible participation of CoP members;
- management and maintenance of the Mediterranean platform for Wetland Contracts, developed and launched through the WEGOCOOP project, to facilitate knowledge sharing, documentation, and networking among members.

The organization in charge of the management and maintenance of the Mediterranean platform for Wetland Contracts is Roma Tre University, Department of Architecture, for at least 5 years beyond the end of WEGOCOOP project (from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2030).

Optional activities | Additional initiatives may be launched at the proposal and initiative of individual CoP members, provided that the proponents assume full responsibility for all related tasks, ensure both the organization and the financial sustainability of the proposed activities. Members of the CoP remain entirely free to decide whether or not to engage in any additional initiative, bearing full responsibility for any resulting commitments or obligations. Such optional activities linked to Wetland Contracts may include, but are not limited to, the examples listed below, which are provided solely as inspiration for potential voluntary proposals from CoP members: guidelines, methodologies, and toolkits; capacity-building activities; research, monitoring, and evaluation of Wetland Contract experiences; policy dialogue and advocacy for Wetland Contracts; communication and awareness-raising; fundraising and resource mobilization for Wetland Contracts.

Any of these initiatives might be amplified through the Interreg Euro-MED 2021-27 Natural Heritage Mission initiatives and shall align with the objectives outlined in Article 1.

Article 5 - Duration of the Community of Practice (when?)

This MoU enters into effect upon signature by the participating parties and establishes the CoP for a period of three (3) years.

All bodies referred to in Article 3 have a duration consistent with that of the CoP.

Any decision to suspend or discontinue the CoP must be approved by the Steering Committee, ensuring that all members participate in the decision-making process.

At the end of the first three years the members of the steering group will decide whether or not to create a new MoU for a further period of three years, depending on the tangible achievements and functioning of the CoP.

**ANATOLIKI S.A.**

(Greece)

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(France)

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