



TOWARDS A NATURE POSITIVE FUTURE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Accelerating the transition for the conservation, restoration and wise use of biodiversity in the Mediterranean

Policy Brief

November 2022

The time for decisive action

The Mediterranean basin faces converging environmental crises that are inextricably linked. As we continue to exert pressures and degrade its coastal and marine environment, the pace of regeneration is not fast enough to permit nature recovery. This degradation affects people's livelihoods, undermines nature's ability to regulate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and enhances the vulnerability of nature and people to extreme weather impacts. It is critical therefore that there is a concerted effort by all countries and society to urgently act to address climate change and biodiversity loss in the region, and to implement options that provide synergistic gains for mitigating both the climate and biodiversity crises.

Achieving a **Nature Positive** goal by 2030 in the Mediterranean requires reversing biodiversity loss, reducing impacts and restoring and renewing nature. A Nature Positive goal will also support climate action and the Sustainable Development Goals and can generate significant additional environmental, social and economic benefits.

For Mediterranean countries to achieve this future, careful planning and a transformational approach that simultaneously addresses both climate and biodiversity targets in addition to sustainable development is required. Countries will need to work together to steer biodiversity actions of the public and private sectors, and to bring about the transformational changes in national goals, policies and actions necessary to avert the biodiversity loss predicted over the next decades.

Action changes will involve linking biodiversity to sustainable food and consumption, greatly increasing relevant financial and human resources and ensuring conservation and restoration actions help protect food and freshwater supplies for the growing coastal towns and cities¹ across the region.

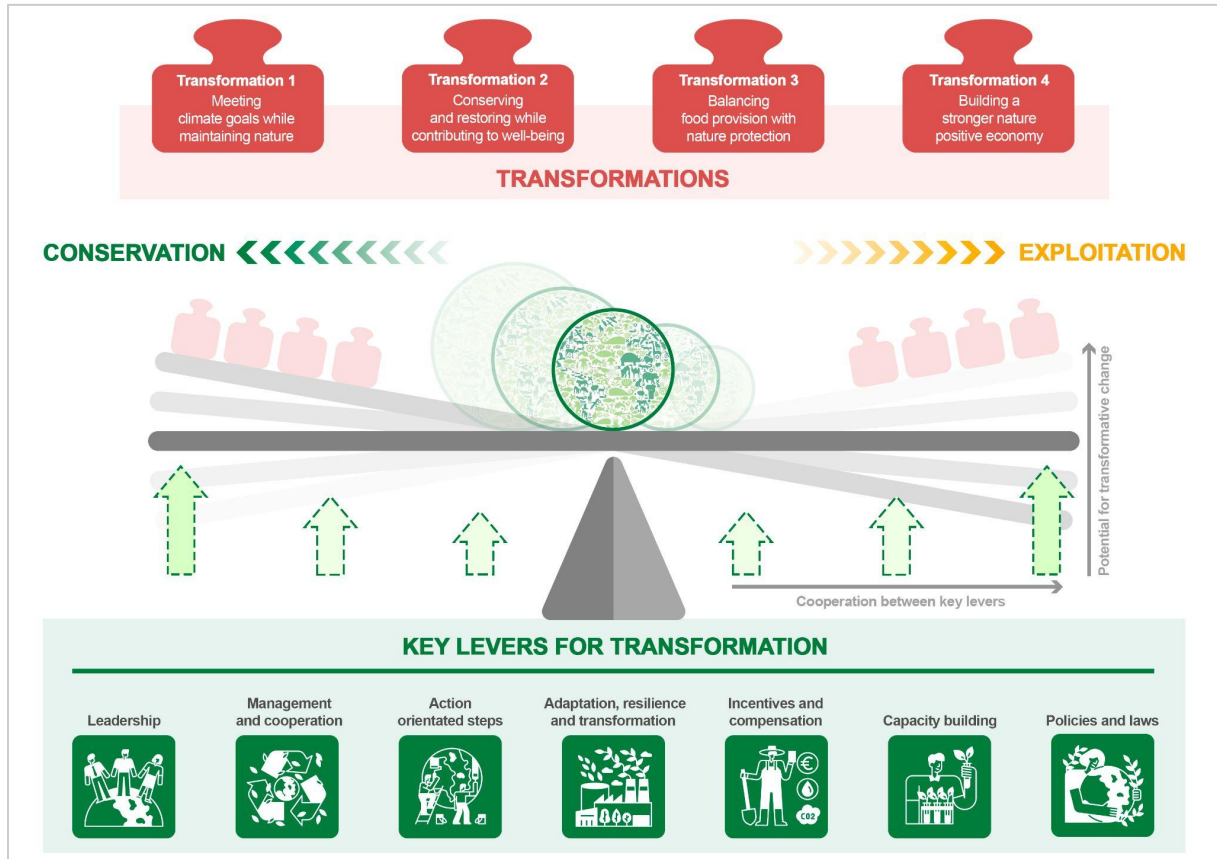
Societal actors and multi-stakeholder platforms in regions and cities, can contribute to this transformational change required for biodiversity and climate. Halting the biodiversity loss in the Mediterranean and taking nature along a path to recovery, alongside meeting climate goals, will require a fundamental transformation of economies, policies and viewpoints.

KEY MESSAGES

- The accelerated climate change and decline in biodiversity across the Mediterranean calls for greater ambitions and actions to bend the curve of biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Climate change and biodiversity are inherently connected and through their better integration in policies and management, the full potential of nature to support climate action could be leveraged at the same time as reversing the decline of coastal and marine biodiversity.
- It is time for urgent and far-reaching actions, leadership and cooperation to build the agenda of transformative change towards a Nature Positive future in the Mediterranean.
- To support this Nature Positive vision, coordinated efforts and local actions are needed for scaling up investment in biodiversity conservation, sustainable use and restoration.
- Regional multi-stakeholder dialogues can help establish a roadmap for this transformation and to build a Nature Positive economy that fully reflects the value of Mediterranean nature in all decision-making.
- All societal actors and multi-stakeholder platforms in regions and cities can and should contribute to this transformational change for biodiversity and climate.

¹ IPBES (2019): Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. Brondizio, E.S., Settele, J., Díaz, S., Ngo, H.T. (eds). IPBES secretariat, Bonn, Germany, 1144 pages. ISBN: 978-3-947851-20-1.

Options and pathways forward in the Mediterranean



In line with the IPBES Global framework and building on the experience in the Mediterranean, four transformational pathways have been identified that could help deliver the transformation change needed to achieve a Nature Positive region by 2030. Each of the pathways have several priority points for intervention (levers) and overarching strategic actions that are necessary to bring this critical change across the region.

TRANSFORMATION 1: MEETING CLIMATE GOALS WHILE MAINTAINING NATURE AND NATURE'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO PEOPLE

This transformation path considers the connection between nature and climate mitigation objectives (such as the Paris Agreement's 'well below' 2°C target). It highlights a wide range of Nature-based Solutions, such as protecting and restoring ecosystems, and reforesting degraded woodland areas, ensuring their naturalness and biodiversity and soil carbon sequestration whilst increasing resilience to climate change impacts. There are also other ecosystem-based climate mitigation activities that provide multiple ecosystem services,

and boost biodiversity, for example, coastal forest and fire management.

Key recommended response actions for initiating this transformation

- ◆ Scale up and implement climate ambition to help steer a more sustainable recovery

Consideration should be given to building a common regional framework for climate change mitigation that complements the adaptation framework already established and fully integrates terrestrial, freshwater and marine biodiversity conservation, and with which Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) should be aligned. This could also open the door for access to greater volumes of climate finance by, for example, nature-positive projects, achieving higher prices on voluntary carbon markets and drawing more finance into the sector. Efforts should also be made to assist least developed countries, incentivising the reduction of emissions from different sectors such as agriculture, maritime transport and the food value chain.

◆ **Invest and develop a more coordinated and integrated approach to Mediterranean nature-based solutions**

Actively encouraging businesses and governments to invest in NbS solutions to enhance climate resilience across urban development, infrastructure projects and coastal management for example, must become a priority objective in all future development planning and policies. Nature-based Solutions must be systematically incorporated into decision-making. Shared learning practices will be core in building this climate resilience and the wider use of NbS in the region.

◆ **Close key knowledge gaps on blue carbon ecosystems for conservation**

Filling knowledge gaps on blue carbon ecosystems (e.g. seagrass and coastal wetlands) will be essential to ensure their adequate conservation and to guide sustainable practices. Efforts and investments to drive research should be targeted at the south and eastern Mediterranean part of the basin, and at ensuring adequate spatial and thematic accuracy data in the northern basin.

TRANSFORMATION 2: CONSERVING AND RESTORING NATURE WHILE CONTRIBUTING POSITIVELY TO HUMAN WELL-BEING

Protection and improved management of coastal and marine ecosystems offer the most cost-effective options for nature-based climate mitigation and adaptation strategies while contributing to positive effects on human well-being. Restoration and rewilding play a critical role in enhancing nature's contributions for delivering NbS that address food security, climate change mitigation and adaptation and biodiversity loss simultaneously. Through this transformation path, these types of interventions must be designed and implemented in cooperation with local communities, to ensure that nature enhances human well-being and that its role in this is recognised by stakeholders.

Key recommended response actions for initiating transformation

◆ **Design and implement a stronger set of policies to end nature loss**

Environmental and sectoral policies need to address the underlying causes of nature degradation and the implementation of these policies needs to be strengthened. Future development policies must ensure full-cost accounting of natural capital, encourage good practices with the strategic use of incentives and subsidies, and bring more coherence between international commitments with territorial-level

action. The use of publicly available knowledge maps on key biodiversity areas and other biodiversity hotspots with existing pressures, can help to flag areas where overexploitation or spatial use undermines the biodiversity and climate change targets. This can then help guide policies such as NDCs to incorporate biodiversity conservation and restoration elements.

◆ **Support of coastal and marine initiatives which promote restoration, recovery, enhancement or resilience**

Support projects and financial resources to make the transformational changes are needed to restore nature in the Mediterranean coastal and marine environment. This support should focus on capitalising actions for nature by working with local communities, local administrations and business stakeholders, and by using ecosystem-based approaches to improve habitat connectivity, the restoration of natural flows (e.g. wetlands), and the level of high/fully protected MPAs in the Mediterranean Sea. Mapping areas where the likelihood of restoration efforts is high, can help to prioritise where and how restoration interventions should be deployed.

◆ **Rebuild marine megafauna**

A Mediterranean-wide effort to reduce maritime traffic collisions, heavy disturbances and diminishing fisheries bycatch mortality, will help Mediterranean megafauna populations to rebound. In addition, enhancing knowledge of the risk of collisions between ships and megafauna, increasing sustainable fishing practices, reducing litter production and increasing spatial protection measures (MPAs or OECMs), will also help to promote recovery in these target species.

TRANSFORMATION 3: BALANCING FOOD PROVISION FROM THE SEA AND THE LAND WITH NATURE PROTECTION IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

Integrated strategies are needed that address sustainable, productive, resilient food systems as well as conserving the environmental health in the Mediterranean. Shifting toward sustainable land-use or sea-resource use that balances food production with nature conservation, will include interventions focused on efficient and resilient agricultural systems, aquaculture and fisheries that support livelihoods and that reduce both their footprint and impacts on nature. To enable this transformation, most governments will need to strengthen coordination mechanisms across different ministries or regional governments to anticipate and manage potential side effects of intervention actions.

Key recommended response actions for initiating transformation

- ◆ **Set up comprehensive plans for the management of small-scale fishing within and around MPAs**

National technical workshops should be formalised for countries to provide a cross-sectoral and inclusive forum for improving small-scale fishing governance in MPAs and other area-based management units (e.g. local fisheries closures or fisheries restricted areas). Comprehensive plans regarding the management of fishing within and around these areas with short- and long- term smart objectives, co-management and participatory mechanisms, will be a key approach to promote good management, secure coastal livelihoods and contribute to regional targets and plans across the Mediterranean.

- ◆ **Transform agriculture and aquaculture production and food demand**

Alternative agriculture and aquaculture production methods could help mitigate emissions (e.g. low-emission, climate-resilient food systems), reduce other sources of environmental pollution and enhance biodiversity-friendly practices. Alternative methods could also help adapt to the climatic conditions. For example, in agriculture, using crops adapted to a changing climate could reduce dependence on water availability and by using local, autochthonous varieties.

TRANSFORMATION 4: BUILDING A STRONGER NATURE POSITIVE ECONOMY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

A nature-positive economy in the Mediterranean will involve a systemic change in the way we think about the value of nature, how we account for natural capital and the costs of ecosystem degradation within economic development. This transformation path needs to have nature-positivity fully embedded into economic reform agendas and a **roadmap for a Nature Positive Economy in the region** should be built that fully reflects the value of Mediterranean nature in all decision-making. Focus should be on high impact sectors, such as infrastructure, water and food (transformation 3) and on adopting and implementing policies that promote circularity, resource efficiency, regenerative production approaches and nature-based solutions in value chains¹.

Key recommended response actions for initiating transformation

- ◆ **Incorporate climate-smart and land-sea integrated management in local plans**

A priority focus for this transformation pathway should be on maintaining and reviving healthy coastlines that are critical to providing protection from flooding, erosion and other extreme weather events. This could be encouraged through the elaboration of climate change adaptation and mitigation action plans that integrate joint management for the land-sea interface and are tailor-made to the local specific context. In particular, tourism and coastal cities should be reconnected with nature through a shift in the paradigm of unsustainable Mediterranean touristic models.

- ◆ **Increase private sector commitments to climate action and directly investing in nature conservation**

Across the Mediterranean, private-sector commitment to climate action with companies further adopting strategies aimed at reaching net-zero emissions and investing in nature, should be promoted. To this end, opportunities to engage the business community, for example the food sector (agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture) and tourism sector (e.g. cruise sector and hotel chains) in policy discussions and building commitment actions, should be capitalised upon.

Cross-cutting key recommended response actions for initiating transformation

In addition to pathway specific response actions, there are several cross-cutting response actions across the four transformation pathways presented. These are:

- ◆ **Promote the Mediterranean value of nature**

An important way to elicit a meaningful change in the protection and conservation of nature will be to shift perspectives across the different stakeholders in the region. Demonstrating and showcasing the importance of Mediterranean biodiversity and the advantages of healthy and resilient nature to society, will greatly help in changing the way stakeholders and the general public view biodiversity conservation.

- ◆ **Mainstream the use of available tools and scale-up local successful initiatives and best practices**

Initiating the implementation of tools and /or standards – especially in regions where

information is scarce, and mainstreaming their use, can create critical action levers for accelerating progress towards climate and biodiversity objectives.

- ◆ **Support increased cooperation between north/south and south/south and between governmental and non-governmental actors at different levels on ecosystem conservation**

Stable partnership and leadership collaborations across regions can be enabled with a sustainable funding plan based on a combination of funding solutions at national and local levels. Solutions include activities of regional and international cooperation, supporting local communities most affected by the climate and biodiversity emergency, and diversifying income generation opportunities beyond tourism, to ensure greater resilience to the financial impacts of future pandemics, human-made risks or natural hazards

Ensuring success

The shift towards these four transformation pathways is an urgent priority for sustainable development in every country across the Mediterranean, towards achieving the SDGs, Net-zero and putting Mediterranean biodiversity on the path of recovery (Nature Positivity). Transformation strategies will be needed to meet time-bound, quantitative targets and additional transformation paths that bring these actions further inland, will be also imperative for success.

Every Mediterranean country therefore, will require a complementary and integrated set of actions from different levels of government, civil society, science and business. Starting with these immediate collective actions, political leadership, cooperation and financing, countries will move a little closer towards these transformations and towards a healthier Mediterranean with a fully sustainable future.

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About this Policy Brief

This policy summary presents main findings and recommendations from a more extensive paper. It draws on various recent policy discussions and papers at a global level, particularly the transformation pathways from the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem

Services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the need for simultaneously addressing climate change and biodiversity targets to generate solutions at the Mediterranean basin.

These recommendations capture key messages coming from the practitioners working for the Mediterranean Biodiversity Protection Community.

The Mediterranean Biodiversity Protection Community brings together over 350 key public and private players. This community is instrumental in successfully contributing to the implementation of biodiversity action plans, bringing knowledge and best practices, monitoring progress on restoration efforts and sustaining momentum for building action on the nexus between biodiversity and climate.

Knowledge Products

Tools developed by the Mediterranean Biodiversity Community projects are available at the [Projects and people | MBPKP \(uma.es\)](#)

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