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Terms of Reference

Interreg NEXT MED Programme
Call for green transition projects



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1. Scope of the document

This document aims to guide applicants in preparing proposals for the call for green transition projects under the Interreg NEXT MED Programme. The purpose is to ensure that applicants are well-informed about the topics addressed by the call, thereby enabling them to develop competitive proposals that, through transnational cooperation projects, have the potential to effectively contribute to a more climate-resilient, low-carbon Mediterranean region. The terms of reference are part of the key documents of the second call for proposals and it shall be read together with the Guidelines for Applicants and text of the call for proposals which contain the main rules for participation, eligibility and evaluation criteria, type of projects as well as technical/financial information.

The Mediterranean area is recognized as a 'climate change hotspot', warming 20% faster than the global average¹.

Impacts and consequences of climate change in the region are multifold and include pressure on declining water resources, rising demand in energy for cooling needs, higher frequency of extreme weather events, degradation of vital ecosystems, increasing heat/pollution-related illnesses and deaths, etc.

By 2050, projections² highlight alarming scenarios for the Mediterranean, including a 2-15% decline in freshwater availability, 15-20% of species at risk of extinction, and a 12-22% reduction in crop yields. Heat-related deaths are projected to double, while climate impacts could result in economic losses reaching tens of billions of euros annually, severely affecting key sectors such as tourism, agriculture, and fisheries.

According to research³, climate-related phenomena will exacerbate human mobility with climate-forced displacement to grow significantly over the coming decades: in the worst scenarios, it is expected that up to 19 million people (9.0 percent of the total population) in the North Africa⁴ region alone could be forced to move internally within their countries by 2050, due to slow-onset climate change impacts, such as water scarcity, reduced crop productivity, and rising sea.

Against this backdrop and in light of worrying future warming trends, it is essential to implement and mainstream scalable solutions to mitigate and adapt to the consequences

¹ "THE CLIMATE CHANGE EFFECT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: Six stories from an overheating sea" – report by WWF (https://wwfint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/final_wwf_med_cc_6_case_studies_2021.pdf)

² "Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean Basin – Current Situation and Risks for the Future. First Mediterranean Assessment Report" by the Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change (MedECC). Available at <https://www.medecc.org/medecc-reports/climate-and-environmental-change-in-the-mediterranean-basin-current-situation-and-risks-for-the-future-1st-mediterranean-assessment-report/>

³ "Climate change and migration: Understanding factors, developing opportunities in the Sahel Zone, West Africa and the Maghreb." Joint publication by joint publication by European Institute of the Mediterranean and Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom Madrid. Available at https://www.iemed.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Climate-Change-and-Migration_FNF_IEMed_.pdf

⁴ "Clement, Viviane; Rigaud, Kanta Kumari; de Sherbinin, Alex; Jones, Bryan; Adamo, Susana; Schewe, Jacob; Sadiq, Nian; Shabahat, Elham. 2021. Groundswell Part 2: Acting on Internal Climate Migration. © World Bank, Washington, DC. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/36248>



of climate change on already strained ecosystems and vulnerable economies and societies. Through this call for proposals, the Programme aims to offer a collaborative platform for concerned stakeholders from the 15 participating countries to develop joint solutions to tackle both current and future climate change impacts. This aligns with national policies and international frameworks like the Paris Agreement, the European Green Deal, and the Union for the Mediterranean's 2030 GreenerMed Agenda.

Applicants are expected to propose solutions that adopt a holistic approach, extending beyond environmental sectors - such as water management, circular economy, energy efficiency, climate change adaptation, and disaster risk prevention - to engage multiple levels of society and the economy. This includes business (supporting SMEs in decarbonizing business models), innovation (accelerating the transfer of cutting-edge green technologies), education (raising environmental awareness and training climate resilience professionals), policy-making (integrating climate objectives into regional and local policies), and society (encouraging sustainable living, including welfare and health). The Programme's comprehensive approach emphasizes that achieving meaningful change requires innovative and scalable technical solutions along with societal and policy transformations to effectively address the rapid warming of the Mediterranean.

Thus, these terms of reference provide, for each of the **9 Specific Objectives covered by the call**, a set of indicative actions that could be implemented to foster the green transition across the Mediterranean region. These actions are intended to serve as guidance and inspiration, encouraging applicants to consider, adapt, or further develop those that best contribute to advancing the green transition in the Mediterranean, in alignment with the chosen Specific Objective. The list of actions provided in this document is not exhaustive, as addressing the magnitude and intensity of climate change in the Mediterranean requires a diverse range of innovative, rapidly deployable, cost-effective, and replicable approaches to create a sustainable and resilient future for the region and its people. Thus, when drafting project proposals, Applicants are encouraged to consider a combination of actions – rather than just one single action – to amplify the potential impact of the project.

The terms of reference should be read in conjunction with the Programme Document, specifically chapter 2 “Priorities”, the guidelines for applicants, as well as the other relevant call for proposals' s documents.

2. Indicative type of actions per Specific Objective

The added value of Interreg NEXT MED projects relies on fostering collaboration and delivering meaningful, measurable impacts across the Mediterranean region. Award criterion 1.2, “Transnational added value and impact” is central in evaluating the relevance and potential of proposed projects. This criterion ensures that initiatives transcend local contexts and contribute to shared regional objectives, addressing common challenges, leveraging collective approaches and delivering joint benefits.

In light of this, it is crucial to re-emphasize the transnational dimension within the framework of project development and implementation under the call for green transition



projects. While localized activities, such as infrastructure renovations, implementation of plots or community-level initiatives, hold intrinsic value, their alignment with broader transnational objectives must be explicit and well explained. Projects must demonstrate how their outcomes will generate benefits beyond local contexts, fostering cooperation, knowledge exchange, and results across the territories of the organizations involved in a project.

Transnational relevance and impact must be embedded in every phase of project development and execution, from needs assessment and objective setting to activity planning, dissemination strategies and actual implementation. This ensures that projects are not only the sum of localized solutions but also drivers of regional impact and progress, enabling sustainable development across the Mediterranean through a shared commitment to addressing common environmental challenges.

2.1 Specific objective 1.1: Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies

While innovation is expected to play a major role in mitigating climate change and promoting decarbonization, the development and diffusion of climate technologies are too slow in most sectors and countries to accelerate low-carbon transitions. While the nexus of climate change and innovation is clear, moving a novel technology from the lab to society use consists of a complex co-evolving process among technology, regulations, infrastructure and consumer behavior. While existing technologies such as renewable energy can be efficiently deployed to achieve significant gains in the carbon efficiency of our societies, harnessing the potential of advanced and cutting-edge technologies for adaptation – including but not limited carbon capture, hydrogen energy, Artificial Intelligence (AI) solutions for climate adaptation, advanced batteries - is not only a risk mitigation strategy but a potential source of competitive advantage for the Mediterranean region.

A key challenge of the cooperation area is thus to push those enabling factors - in a transnational and cross-border perspective - that can help the acceleration of the transfer and commercialization of research outputs and technological innovations for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, improving climate resilience, and rolling-out low-carbon solutions, fully realizing the vision of the Paris Agreement highlighting technology development and transfer for improving resilience to climate change.

Potential transnational actions under Specific Objective 1.1 may include:

- Establishing collaborative platforms to facilitate the transfer and commercialization of climate-related research outcomes and technologies.
- Creating partnerships and networks between research institutions, startups, and industries to promote the development and deployment of innovative technologies for climate adaptation.



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- Promoting pilot projects and demonstration initiatives for advanced low-carbon technologies, such as carbon capture and storage, hydrogen energy systems, AI solutions for climate resilience, and advanced battery technologies, etc.
- Facilitating partnerships between public entities, research organizations and private firms to increase investments in climate adaptation and low-carbon initiatives and accelerate the commercialization of innovative climate technologies.
- Creating transnational incubators or accelerators that focus on developing and scaling up climate adaptation technologies.
- Creating open data platforms that allow sharing of climate-related data to support R&D, innovation, and public-private collaboration and identifying innovative technology solutions.

2.2 Specific objective 1.2: Enhancing sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs and job creation in SMEs, including by productive investments

SMEs form the backbone of Mediterranean economies⁵, accounting for a significant share of businesses and employing millions across the region. Despite their critical role in driving economic growth, SMEs are often overlooked as part of the solution to climate change, as attention is primarily given to investing in climate mitigation (renewable energy) and resilient infrastructure for adaptation. Yet, SMEs hold tremendous potential to drive the green transition by offering innovative, eco-friendly, local solutions that enhance adaptation and resilience to climate change. With the right support, tools, ecosystems, and investments, SMEs can become key agents of climate resilience.

In addition, although the environmental impact of individual SMEs may seem minor, their cumulative footprint is significant, contributing considerably to CO₂ emissions, waste generation, and energy and water consumption. Enhancing the environmental performance and trajectories of SMEs remains a crucial transnational challenge for advancing towards greener economic growth and achieving sustainability across the region.

Potential transnational actions under Specific Objective 1.2 may include:

- Promoting green entrepreneurship, particularly among women, youth, the unemployed, and other vulnerable groups.
- Encouraging the uptake, review and adaptation of business models that fully integrate the green dimension into the Triple Sustainability (Economic, Social and Environmental) and considering sustainability as an essential part of the value created and of the competitive advantage of SMEs.
- Providing specialized support, including incubation, acceleration, and mentoring programs, to early-stage startups and small businesses focusing on products and

⁵ "Digitalisation of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the Mediterranean" – report by the European Committee of the Regions (<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/313586b6-fc86-11ea-b44f-01aa75ed71a1>)



services related to the low carbon economy, resilience to climate change, and circular economy.

- Supporting the diversification of existing businesses and SMEs into new products, services, and markets associated with lower carbon emissions, eco-innovations, clean technologies, and climate resilience.
- Establishing business support services, platforms, and networks to foster the internationalization and B2B transnational connections of green economy businesses and facilitate the commercial uptake of eco-innovations and clean technologies.
- Providing digital platforms and tools that help SMEs monitor and reduce their environmental impacts, such as tools for tracking energy consumption, carbon emissions, and waste production.
- Accelerating the decarbonization of business models by assisting SMEs in their transition towards circular business models and net-zero emissions.
- Connecting investors, business angels, and venture capitalists with SMEs and climate entrepreneurs to help scale green-oriented businesses.
- Establishing regional digital marketplaces to connect green product and service providers with potential customers across the Mediterranean region, boosting the visibility of SMEs in the green economy.
- Offering tailored training for SMEs to help them become more resilient to climate impacts by integrating climate risk management into their business operations and adapting to new regulatory mechanisms, including the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM).

2.3 Specific objective 2.1: Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions

To effectively support the green transition, it is essential to address the region's need to enhance energy efficiency in consumption, conservation, management, and integration. This must consider the heavy reliance on fossil fuels, particularly in Mediterranean Partner Countries (MPCs), where up to 90% of energy needs are met by fossil fuels. In contrast, EU Mediterranean Countries (EUMCs) are progressively increasing their share of renewable energy, driven by substantial efforts to reduce dependence on fossil fuels⁶. Considering the low energy efficiency and a growing population, especially in MPCs, leading to increased GHG emissions, implementing energy efficiency measures alongside integrating renewable energy sources - widely available but underutilized - can bring substantial benefits. These actions can help reduce energy consumption, dependency on costly fossil fuels, and ultimately accelerate the shift to clean energy sources. A strong focus on energy efficiency can also promote sustainable growth and economic competitiveness.

Boosting the energy transition requires a multi-dimensional approach that includes raising awareness, advancing capacity-building and training, fostering collaboration, facilitating

⁶ Interreg NEXT MED Programme Document



technology transfer, and applying research outcomes tailored to local needs. Emphasis should be placed on increasing the adoption of relevant technologies through pilot projects and proof-of-concept initiatives. The varying levels of energy efficiency between the Mediterranean shores, with some regions - particularly MPCs - relying heavily on fossil fuels, and others - especially EUMCs - integrating more renewable energy, create a unique opportunity for transnational experimentation. This diversity can serve as a laboratory for piloting and exchanging best practices in energy efficiency. These experiments could span political and regulatory frameworks, technological advancements, energy management and storage, as well as consumer behavior, targeting businesses, households, and other entities. By leveraging these differences, territories can collaborate to enhance energy efficiency on multiple fronts.

While priority should be given to improving energy efficiency in the public sector, which manages numerous inefficient infrastructures, the needs of the private sector - particularly in key productive sectors at the SME level - must also be considered to ensure a comprehensive transition.

Potential transnational actions under Specific Objective 2.1 may include:

- Showcasing and transferring innovative approaches to energy efficiency through the implementation of pilot actions on energy efficiency renovations and upgrades for public infrastructure and existing housing stock (for instance social housing).
- Providing targeted support for SMEs to implement energy efficiency measures, such as equipment upgrades and energy audits, to reduce their overall energy consumption.
- Providing technical assistance and training to builders, engineers, architects, and contractors to integrate energy-efficient designs, green building materials, and sustainable construction techniques, enhancing the energy performance of both new and existing public infrastructures and potentially apply the approaches of the New European Bauhaus⁷.
- Implementing public awareness campaigns to educate citizens on the benefits of energy efficiency and encourage behavior changes that reduce energy consumption.
- Conducting engagement initiatives to involve communities, businesses, and public administrations in the planning and establishment of energy communities.
- Creating transnational knowledge-sharing and training initiatives for public authorities to learn from successful energy management practices implemented in other Mediterranean countries and strengthen their capacity to develop, implement, and monitor energy efficiency initiatives.
- Supporting regulatory reforms that incentivize energy efficiency in both new and existing buildings, ensuring alignment with regional and national sustainability goals.

⁷ The New European Bauhaus (NEB) is an EU policy and funding initiative launched by the European Commission in 2021 that fosters sustainable solutions for transforming the built environment and lifestyles under the green transition. More information here: https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/index_en



- Promote non-technological approaches towards sustainable energy use and efficiency such as energy sufficiency (focused on reducing energy needs)⁸ and energy sobriety (focused on reducing energy wastage)⁹.

2.4 Specific objective 2.2: Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account ecosystem based approaches

The Mediterranean region is highly vulnerable to climate change, with significant challenges already evident. Rainfall is becoming increasingly scarce and unevenly distributed, and even slight rises in temperature are expected to substantially disrupt the water cycle. Meteorological conditions are becoming increasingly unpredictable, with extreme events such as temperature spikes, droughts, floods, storms, landslides, and wildfires devastating large areas around the Mediterranean basin. Terrestrial and marine ecosystems, along with their biodiversity, are under significant pressure. In marine areas, rising water temperatures, algae blooms, increasing salinity, and invasive species pose immediate threats, affecting key sectors such as fishing and tourism.

Key sectors in the region, including agriculture, fisheries, and tourism, demonstrate limited resilience and are expected to be heavily impacted by climate change. Therefore, enhancing climate resilience and increasing adaptation capacity - especially through ecosystem-based approaches - is essential for the Mediterranean. While mitigation efforts, such as renewable energy adoption and energy efficiency, have gained traction in political agendas, climate adaptation remains an under-recognized challenge. **Promoting nature-based solutions must be prioritized** to effectively address both mitigation and adaptation needs.

To support these efforts, transnational cooperation is crucial to raise awareness about the impacts of climate change on the environment, economy, and society - going beyond mitigation to address adaptation, risk prevention, and disaster resilience. This approach involves enhancing collaboration, building capacity for joint responses, and developing effective communication mechanisms and demonstration projects to foster cooperation. Effective outcomes depend on creating an enabling environment where administrative bodies and decision-makers are equipped with the capabilities and provisions needed to advance climate adaptation, risk prevention, and disaster resilience through integrated, multi-level governance. The ultimate ambition is to strengthen conditions for

⁸ This concept involves using only the energy necessary to meet basic needs and maintain a decent quality of life, emphasizing the importance of setting limits on consumption to avoid excess. It focuses on aligning energy use with what is truly required for both well-being and environmental sustainability. For more information on the concept of "sufficiency", please refer to the "[Manifesto for a resilient and resource-wise Europe: sufficiency at the heart of the EU's future](#)" drafted by the European Environmental Bureau.

⁹ Energy sobriety promotes a cultural shift toward consciously reducing energy consumption, not just through efficiency but by choosing to consume less. It encourages moderation, reassessing energy needs, reducing waste, and adopting simpler, low-energy lifestyles, while questioning the necessity of current energy use levels. For more information, please visit this link: [Acting together for Energy Sobriety \(veolia.com\)](#).



mainstreaming climate adaptation and risk prevention, ultimately increasing the region's capacity to cope with climate change and related hazards.

Potential transnational actions under Specific Objective 2.2 may include:

- Promoting adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: fires, storms, drought, floods and landslides (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem-based approaches).
- Enhancing climate monitoring and early warning systems to prepare communities for extreme weather events, coupled with education and training for disaster response.
- Implementing nature-based solutions to increase resilience to climate change through the restoration and reconstruction of natural habitats, such as wetlands, forests and marine and coastal reserves, while preserving and enhancing biodiversity.
- Implementing nature-based coastal defenses, such as mangrove and seagrass restoration, to protect against storm surges, erosion, and sea-level rise.
- Implementing green infrastructures in urban areas, such as green roofs and increased vegetation, to reduce the impacts of rising temperatures and heatwaves.
- Promoting climate-smart farming practices, such as soil conservation, agroforestry, and efficient irrigation techniques, to improve resilience to climate change in the agricultural practices.
- Conducting targeted campaigns to educate and empower the public with the knowledge and tools needed to adapt to climate risks, enhance personal preparedness, and implement community resilience practices, thereby reducing the risks of climate-induced mobility.
- Providing training and knowledge-sharing opportunities for policymakers to mainstream climate adaptation into local and national policies.

2.5 Specific objective 2.3: Promoting access to water and sustainable water management

The water sector in the Mediterranean faces increasing scarcity due to climate change, over-extraction, and rising demand, requiring innovative solutions for sustainable water management to meet the needs of human consumption, agriculture, and the environment. To meet these challenges, targeted actions are required to manage unevenly distributed water resources, reduce pollution, and enhance inefficient distribution systems and wastewater treatment. The Programme area faces substantial issues, such as significant water losses, inadequate wastewater treatment, and the pressures of population growth and urban expansion - all of which demand interventions across the water cycle, including the rehabilitation of degraded water bodies.

Climate change further intensifies these challenges, causing reduced water availability due to increased evaporation and changes in precipitation patterns, leading to reduced surface



water levels and diminishing groundwater reserves. Flooding events, while increasing in frequency, are often poorly captured and managed, leading to both wasted water and damage to existing infrastructure. These disruptions strain already limited resources, reduce water quality, and add pressure to supply networks, exacerbating inequalities in water access.

Sustainable water management necessitates practical transnational cooperation to build awareness, enhance collaboration, and transfer technology tailored to local needs through the supports initiatives that promote water efficiency, adapt systems to climate impacts, incentivize conservation, and rehabilitate water bodies. Demonstration initiatives and pilot projects using innovative technologies are key to showcasing effective solutions.

These goals can only be realized with the right capacities and frameworks for administrative bodies to support efficient water management, including water use monitoring, smart metering, and water pricing aligned with existing regulations. Equipping authorities with these tools, alongside public infrastructure improvements and community engagement, will establish a foundation for sustainable and resilient water management throughout the region.

Potential transnational actions under Specific Objective 2.3 may include:

- Implementing projects to modernize and upgrade water supply distribution networks, reducing leakages and ensuring more efficient delivery of water to end-users.
- Deploying smart metering and remote monitoring systems for water usage to help optimize water distribution and detect leakages in real time.
- Implementing nature-based solutions, such as wetland restoration and green infrastructure, to improve water retention, reduce runoff, and increase the resilience of water systems to extreme weather events.
- Supporting the implementation of rainwater harvesting systems and greywater recycling solutions in public and community infrastructure to promote sustainable water use.
- Promoting wastewater reuse in agriculture through sustainable treatment technologies, efficient irrigation systems, and farmer support to enhance water use and crop productivity.
- Providing capacity-building programs for local authorities and water utilities to enhance their capacity for effective water management, focusing on modern tools and best practices for conservation and resource optimization.
- Implementing pilot projects to develop and showcase energy-efficient wastewater treatment systems in public and community infrastructures, incorporating renewable energy sources to minimize the environmental footprint of these facilities.
- Launching education campaigns to promote community involvement in water conservation, focusing on practical steps citizens and businesses can take to save water.



- Introducing water pricing mechanisms that incentivize efficient water use, ensuring fair pricing while promoting conservation practices.
- Creating synergies between water management authorities to accelerate efficiency improvements in water networks by optimizing and upgrading existing infrastructure.

2.6 Specific objective 2.4: Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy

The Mediterranean area is undergoing a transition towards a circular economy, with efforts to shift from traditional linear production methods to a longer lifecycle approach, focusing on designing products that can be repaired or regenerated. In Italy for instance, the recycling rate for all waste has reached almost 68%, the highest figure in the European Union¹⁰. 'España Circular 2030', Spain's circular economy strategy will allow a 30% reduction in the national consumption of resources. Countries in the southern Mediterranean, such as Egypt with its Vision 2030¹¹ goal of recycling 80% of solid waste, or Tunisia's National Waste Management Strategy¹² to increase the recycling rate from 5% to 20% by 2030, are also making significant strides toward circular economy models.

Despite progress, the cycle of recycling and re-use remains incomplete, highlighting the need for targeted interventions throughout the entire material production, consumption and disposal chain. The objective is to minimize or eliminate final disposal, adhering to waste hierarchy principles and, where applicable, the "polluter pays" principle (specific to EU Member States).

Achieving a successful transition to a circular economy requires interventions across all stages of the material lifecycle - from product design to disposal - promoting life-cycle management, sustainable product design, resource efficiency, low-carbon manufacturing, transport and distribution, and effective waste management, including anaerobic digestion of separately collected bio-waste.

To support this transition, it is crucial to prioritize the sourcing of sustainable and locally available materials. Encouraging the use of raw materials that are sustainably extracted or produced reduces the environmental impacts associated with resource depletion and transportation. This includes fostering the use of renewable materials, recycled inputs, and by-products to create value-added products, thereby reinforcing a circular approach throughout the material lifecycle.

Effective household waste management is also critical to advancing the circular economy. Measures should focus on waste prevention, minimization, and encouraging sorting at the source to improve reuse and recycling rates. Promoting practices like composting,

¹⁰ Fourth national report on the circular economy by ENEA-CEN available at <https://www.media.enea.it/en/press-releases-and-news/years-archive/year-2022/environment-from-the-circular-economy-the-raw-materials-italy-lacks.html>

¹¹ 2030 Vision of Egypt: https://mped.gov.eg/Files/Egypt_Vision_2030_EnglishDigitalUse.pdf

¹² Stratégie Nationale de Gestion des Déchets (2020-2030) available at <http://www.fnct.tn/uploads/biblio/20230508102951.pdf>



separating recyclables, and reducing single-use items can significantly reduce landfill volumes, enhancing resource recovery and sustainability.

Potential transnational actions under Specific Objective 2.4 may include:

- Promoting the adoption of circular economy practices among SMEs, such as resource recycling, product reuse, and sustainable manufacturing.
- Promoting industrial symbiosis projects where waste or by-products from one industry are used as raw materials by another, reducing waste and enhancing resource efficiency.
- Providing technical assistance to SMEs to redesign their products and services to minimize waste and make better use of resources, thereby improving resilience and reducing environmental impact.
- Encouraging SMEs to adopt green supply chain management practices, such as sourcing sustainably produced materials and reducing waste along the supply chain, helping SMEs connect with suppliers that prioritize sustainability.
- Encouraging local and regional governments to adopt circular procurement policies that prioritize the purchase of recycled, renewable, and sustainable products.
- Supporting transnational pilot projects that demonstrate waste-to-resource technologies, such as turning agricultural waste into bio-based materials or converting plastic waste into new products.
- Building knowledge on the benefits and practical applications of circular economy practices through training and capacity-building programs for SMEs, policymakers, and the public
- Developing neighborhood recycling programs that provide convenient access to recycling facilities and support the segregation of different types of waste at the household level.
- Developing community platforms that encourage households to share items like tools, furniture, and appliances, while also promoting "repair cafes" where residents can bring items for repair rather than discarding them, thereby promoting reuse, extending product lifecycles, and reducing waste.

2.7 Specific objective 3.1: Improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training

To support the green transition effectively, it is essential to cultivate a skilled workforce capable of driving competitiveness, innovation, and climate resilience. The shift towards a sustainable economy requires not only technological advancements but also a labor force that is well-equipped with the necessary skills to embrace green practices and foster a climate-resilient future.

However, many regions across the Mediterranean face significant challenges, such as low levels of digital literacy and limited expertise in emerging green skills. These skill gaps risk

exacerbating existing social inequalities, leaving behind those unable to participate in or benefit from new opportunities related to the green transition and climate adaptation. Without targeted efforts to bridge these gaps, entire communities could be excluded from the benefits of the green transition, deepening economic and social disparities.

By prioritizing the development of green skills through the integration of climate resilience issues into education and vocational training systems, and by emphasizing green/climate-oriented upskilling, reskilling, and lifelong learning, the Mediterranean region can create a workforce capable of navigating the challenges and opportunities of the green transition. This approach will help reduce inequalities and ensure that individuals of all ages are equipped to adapt to new green technologies and practices, ultimately contributing to a sustainable and resilient future for all.

Targeting specific groups, including but not limited to youth, elderly individuals, vulnerable populations at risk of exclusion, NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), and those living in remote areas, is crucial for empowering climate resilience professionals across society.

Potential transnational actions under Specific Objective 3.1 may include:

- Developing regional vocational training programs that provide hands-on experience with green technologies, renewable energy installations, sustainable practices, and climate adaptation techniques, etc.
- Establishing transnational initiatives to upskill workers from sectors affected by climate change, equipping them with the skills needed for green jobs.
- Promoting reskilling programs for NEETs, with a focus on the emerging opportunities within the green economy sectors.
- Expanding e-learning opportunities and digital literacy training focused on green skills, especially for those living in remote areas or facing access challenges.
- Creating online platforms offering climate resilience courses, green business training, and sustainable practices education to enhance lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- Facilitating knowledge exchange and cooperation between educational institutions to share resources and improve training quality across the region.
- Partnering with businesses to create apprenticeship and internship programs that offer practical, green skill development opportunities, and other practices aimed at reducing the green skills gap between the industry and the workforce.
- Establishing green career guidance services in schools, universities, and community centers to guide individuals towards career paths that contribute to the green transition.
- Establishing transnational networks that connect educators, industry experts, and policymakers to directly share best practices for integrating green skills into curricula and vocational training programs.



- Implementing public awareness campaigns that highlight the importance of green skills and the opportunities available in the green economy sectors, particularly for marginalized and underrepresented groups.

2.8 Specific Objective 3.2: Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family- and community-based care

Climate change presents a fundamental threat to human health and may lead to a health crisis. As climatic conditions change and our weather continuously warms, more frequent and intensifying weather and climate events are observed: these include more frequent and intense heatwaves, pollution peaks - contributing to a range of adverse health effects, including cardiovascular diseases, respiratory illnesses - along with an increase in extreme weather events and natural disasters such as floods, landslides, and fires and their potential negative consequences for humans, animals and natural systems.

In addition, climate-sensitive infectious diseases - another major threat - are projected to further spread across the Mediterranean region, bringing subsequent outbreaks of viruses, bacteria and parasites far beyond their previous geographical zones of transmission due to increasing temperatures and changing rainfall patterns.

These climate-induced challenges will significantly impact healthcare systems, adding new pressures to already overwhelmed infrastructures and potentially further disrupting the functioning of health systems. Indeed, the Programme area needs to strengthen the preparedness and resilience of its health care systems and capabilities to the consequences of climate change, amplifying the urgency for a transformative action leading to climate resilient health systems.

Potential transnational actions under Specific Objective 3.2 may include:

- Enhancing protection of communities, especially vulnerable groups, from exposure to climate-related health risks and diseases, including heatwaves and other extreme events.
- Preventing and controlling infectious diseases related to global warming - including vector-borne, waterborne, and food-borne - through joint integrated surveillance of human cases and early warning systems for risk reduction.
- Addressing climate-related mental health issues and distress, including eco-anxiety¹³, particularly among young people.
- Raising awareness, enhancing preparedness, and training health and care workers to inform communities about the impact of climate change on health, advising

¹³ The American Psychological Association has defined eco-anxiety as "the chronic fear of environmental cataclysm that comes from observing the seemingly irrevocable impact of climate change and the associated concern for one's future and that of next generations".



patients on adopting low-carbon behaviors such as diets and active commuting options.

- Developing health facilities to adapt, prepare, and respond to changing climate-related health risks, including natural disasters, by strengthening specific capacities
- Implementing strategies towards low-carbon health systems by reducing GHG emissions in their operations.

2.9 Specific Objective 4.1: Actions to support better cooperation governance of climate resilience

Addressing climate resilience and adaptation across the Mediterranean requires a unified approach, shared understanding, and collaboratively defined solutions that foster inclusive engagement from all stakeholders. Strengthening capacities at all territorial levels is essential to enable effective participation in climate-related transnational initiatives. Building climate resilience demands enhanced cooperation among public administrations, citizens, and stakeholders, encouraging the development of innovative strategies that support effective climate adaptation.

Reinforcing transnational policy recommendations and promoting participatory approaches can foster a just and green transition with tangible impacts on communities and territories. Empowering public authorities - including regional, local, and urban entities - and stakeholders such as economic and social partners, research institutions, universities, and civil society organizations will enable them to contribute to climate resilience, socio-economic stability, and environmental well-being.

Promoting governance models that integrate cross-sectoral, multi-level, and cross-border partnerships is critical for advancing climate adaptation efforts. Encouraging dialogue and cooperation between citizens, civil society, and institutions will help address shared challenges, such as climate adaptation and risk prevention, through transnational exchanges and grassroots, participatory approaches.

Environmental challenges - such as the quality of the water we drink, the air we breathe, the electricity bills we pay, and the waste we manage - are among the most powerful drivers of community engagement. These issues not only impact our daily lives but also serve as catalysts for active citizenship, making them a prime arena for participatory governance. They offer a promising space where collective, transnational action can lead to meaningful change, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and empowering citizens to shape a sustainable future.

Prioritizing a multi-level, multi-sector, and multi-actor approach is crucial, involving the private sector, territorial and thematic networks, social economy actors, and civil society. The focus will be on building transnational communities that engage both citizens and policymakers in climate action, fostering collaboration through people-to-people initiatives and strengthening local capacities. Through these inclusive efforts, the Mediterranean region can seamlessly integrate climate objectives into urban, rural, and regional



development policies, promoting resilient and sustainable development that supports a just green transition for all.

While governance projects related to the Specific Objectives outlined in these Terms of Reference are encouraged, it is important to note that under S.O 4.1, project proposals may consider addressing any Mediterranean challenge that is pertinent to the green transition.

Potential transnational actions under Specific Objective 4.1 may include:

- Facilitating knowledge exchanges through visits, joint seminars, and peer learning programmes between citizens, institutions, and policymakers, promoting collaborative climate solutions and local ownership of climate initiatives.
- Developing and implementing localized climate resilience hubs that enhance the institutional capacity of public authorities and other stakeholders, including groups of citizens, to jointly design and deliver effective public services related to climate adaptation.
- Establishing regional networks for cross-sectoral and multi-level governance that facilitate cooperation between national, regional, and local authorities in developing climate strategies and risk management frameworks.
- Supporting the development of transnational advocacy groups to influence policy at the regional, national, and EU levels, ensuring climate adaptation and resilience are prioritized in policy discussions.
- Launching transnational public awareness initiatives to educate citizens on climate risks and the role of local communities in supporting adaptation and resilience, incorporating local cultural and socio-economic contexts.
- Organizing training workshops for local, regional, and urban authorities to enhance their capacities in climate adaptation planning, risk management, and integrating climate objectives into policy frameworks.
- Advancing innovation in policy, legislation, and regulatory frameworks at the transnational level to incentivize the development and adoption of climate technologies through mechanisms such as tax exemptions, credits, subsidies, public grants, and other green incentives.
- Integrating the nexus between human mobility and climate change into local public policy development by strengthening evidence-based data on climate-induced displacement and fostering stakeholder collaboration to develop adaptive strategies that mitigate displacement risks and enhance community resilience to climate impacts.

3. Delivering a Just Transition

The concept of a Just Transition aims to ensure that the shift towards a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy is both equitable and inclusive, taking into account the socioeconomic impacts on affected communities. This approach aligns with definitions provided by key international frameworks such as the Paris Agreement and the International Labour



Organization ¹⁴ (ILO), which emphasize the importance of creating decent work opportunities, protecting livelihoods, and fostering social equity.

In the context of the Mediterranean region, a Just Transition requires targeted actions to mitigate the socioeconomic consequences of the green transition, particularly for vulnerable groups and sectors heavily reliant on carbon-intensive activities.

In developing project proposals, applicants should seek to embed the principles of fairness and inclusivity at every stage of the project lifecycle, from design to implementation and evaluation. When relevant, this involves identifying and addressing the specific needs of vulnerable and marginalized groups, who are often disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change. This includes ensuring equitable access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making processes to enhance their resilience and adaptive capacity.

Projects should prioritize actions that reduce inequalities, foster social cohesion, and create pathways for the active participation of all stakeholders, including women, youth, potentially climate-induced displaced populations, and communities most impacted by climate change.

By focusing on these principles, proposals should aim to deliver tangible benefits that go beyond environmental improvements, such as creating sustainable livelihoods, promoting social equity, and strengthening local capacities to adapt to and mitigate climate challenges. This approach ensures that no one is left behind while accelerating collective progress toward the overarching objective of building a climate-resilient, low-carbon Mediterranean region that is prepared to meet future environmental challenges.

4. Sources

To draft this document, the following main sources were used:

- Climate ADAPT: [Vector-borne diseases and climate change: a European perspective](#)
- European Environment Agency: [Heatwaves, spread of infectious diseases due to climate change growing health threats to Europeans](#)
- Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance: [The deadly diseases that are spiking because of climate change](#)
- Science Direct: [Innovation and climate change: A review and introduction to the special issue](#)
- Science Direct: [Guidance for health professionals seeking climate action](#)
- Small Enterprise Assistance Funds (SEAF): [Fighting Climate Change Through SMEs](#)
- The Lancet: [Climate anxiety in young people: a call to action](#)
- The Royal College of Pathologists: [The effects of climate change on health](#)

¹⁴ Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all (International Labour Organization): <https://www.ilo.org/media/435091/download>



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- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change: [What is technology development and transfer?](#)
- UN Trade and Development: [Assessing Greener Economic Diversification Trajectories](#)
- World Economic Forum: [7 ways to harness technology for climate adaptation](#)
- World Economic Forum: [6 technologies to help the world adapt to climate change](#)
- World Economic Forum: [Innovation and Adaptation in the Climate Crisis: Technology for the New Normal](#)
- World Health Organization: [Operational framework for building climate resilient and low carbon health systems](#)
- World Health Organization: [Communicating on climate change and health: Toolkit for health professionals](#)