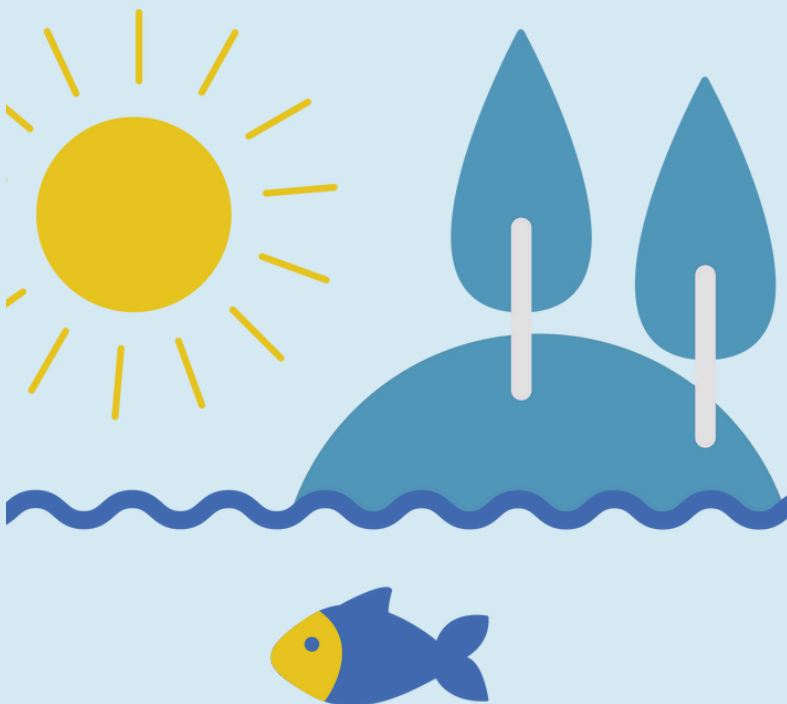


# MEDLAB THEMATIC TALKS

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## Biodiversity, Parks and Green Infrastructures

Safeguarding nature and biodiversity takes a long-term commitment - Interreg projects in the Mediterranean make it happen by joining forces with Horizon, Life, Erasmus, and other EU funds. Through collaboration, strategic action, and innovative solutions, partners in the region are enhancing ecological resilience, restoring natural habitats, and promoting nature-based solutions for a sustainable Mediterranean.



# ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Ensuring a sustainable future for Mediterranean biodiversity requires coordinated efforts that bridge funding programmes, sectors, and governance levels. Interreg projects play a key role in preserving nature by creating synergies with EU funds such as Horizon Europe, LIFE, and Erasmus, fostering innovative solutions and long-term engagement.

Discussions highlighted the importance of green infrastructure as a unifying concept - connecting ecological resilience with community participation and economic sustainability. From green walls and marine protected areas to urban parks and eco-museums, nature-based solutions are proving essential in adapting to climate change, restoring ecosystems, and enhancing local livelihoods.

This publication presents insights from the MedLab Thematic Week held in December 2024, showcasing how Interreg projects contribute to integrating biodiversity preservation into territorial development. While the exchanges took place during the event, the lessons extend far beyond, providing valuable reflections on strengthening cooperation and capitalising on successful approaches.

Looking ahead, fostering mindset shift - particularly among younger generations - is critical to securing long-term biodiversity protection. By promoting territorial cooperation and cross-sectoral synergies, Mediterranean stakeholders can ensure that nature conservation remains at the heart of regional development strategies.

# BIODIVERSITY, PARKS & GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE: BUILDING ECOLOGICAL RESILIENCE

The MedLab Thematic Talks highlighted the role of Interreg projects in fostering ecological resilience through biodiversity conservation, parks, and green infrastructure development. By connecting regional initiatives with Horizon Europe, LIFE, Erasmus+, COSME, and other EU funds, Interreg ensures that successful approaches are mainstreamed, scaled up, and sustained over the long-term.

## The role of local communities

The discussion among participants showcased how local communities play a key role in keeping green infrastructure alive, making it an essential part of the Mediterranean's ecological resilience.

From green walls, parks, eco-museums, and corridors to marine protected areas, participants shared and discussed real-world examples. The CORALLO project (Interreg Italy-Malta), presented by Broni Hornsbi, highlighted the link between marine ecosystems and cultural heritage. MEDGARDENS+ (Interreg Italy-Slovenia), introduced by Lorena Sassi, demonstrated community-driven management of gardens and urban horticulture. NAWAMED (Interreg ENI CBC Med), presented by Latifa Bousselmi, explored nature-based solutions for water management, while MUSE (Interreg Italy-Greece), presented by Daniela Guida, addressed the environmental sustainability of small ports.

## Beyond Projects: Strengthening Long-Term Impact

The discussions reinforced how Interreg projects serve as catalysts for long-term environmental processes, complementing Horizon Europe, COSME, LIFE, Erasmus+, and other ERDF-funded initiatives. Synergies between programmes are vital in amplifying impact and securing lasting policy integration.

While smart solutions and local-private sector collaboration are key, speakers stressed that preserving biodiversity requires a cultural shift, particularly among younger generations. The people-to-people approach remains Interreg's strength, fostering cross-border cooperation while ensuring alignment with broader EU policies.

## Collaboration in action

Participants appreciated the mix of expert viewpoints and practical discussions, valuing the exchange of concrete ideas, solutions and synergies between projects and programmes. The event encouraged new partnerships, collaboration between competitors, and stronger dialogue across funding instruments, reinforcing the shared mission of a resilient Mediterranean.



**Let's define the theme of the day!** Biodiversity, parks, and green infrastructures are still quite broad topics. The keep.eu platform classifies all projects across 42 themes, some of them in one way or another consistent with the concepts of “biodiversity, parks, and green infrastructures”. Here is how the participants intended the green infrastructures, providing some examples.

# INTERREG PROGRAMMES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SUPPORT OF BIODIVERSITY, PARKS, AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURES - SOME FACTS

To frame biodiversity, parks, and green infrastructures, we selected **four themes** from the [keep.eu](https://keep.eu) database and applied them to the Interreg programmes working in the Mediterranean region:

- Climate change and biodiversity
- Coastal management and maritime issues
- Sustainable management of natural resources
- Waterways, lakes, and rivers

These broad themes help capture a range of topics relevant to biodiversity and green infrastructure. However, not all projects within these themes focus directly on these aspects, while some relevant projects might not be explicitly classified under these categories.

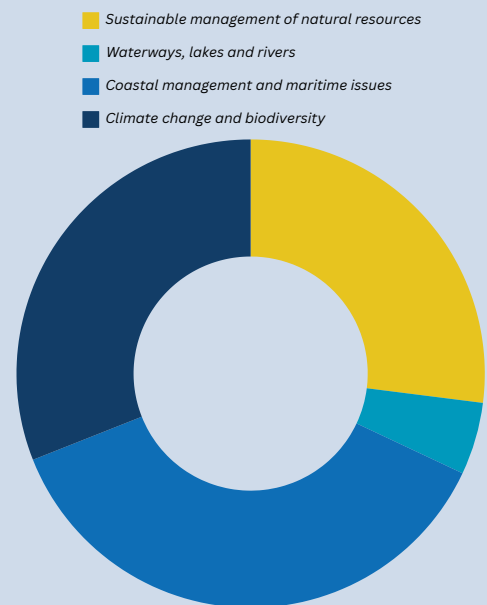
## Project incidence and distribution

Out of the 1,420 projects analysed in Mediterranean Interreg programmes, 228 (16%) are consistent with green infrastructure. However, the distribution varies significantly between programmes:

- Highest proportion: Italy-Malta (54%)
- Lowest proportion: Croatia-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Montenegro (3.4%)
- Other high-scoring programmes: Euro-MED and Italy-Tunisia (25%)

Among the 228 projects identified:

- 37% (85 projects) focus on Coastal management and maritime issues
- 31% (71 projects) fall under Climate change and biodiversity.



Green infrastructures: projects per sector (14-20)

## Financial investment

The total investment in green infrastructure projects amounts to €411.4 million, representing 19% of the total project budget (€2.239 billion, EU + co-financing).

In terms of budget intensity:

Waterways, lakes, and rivers projects show the highest financial allocation per project, averaging €3.5 million, compared to an average of €1.7 million for other sectors.

## Partner Involvement

A total of 1,547 project partners are engaged in green infrastructure-related projects, making up 18% of all project partners (8,427).

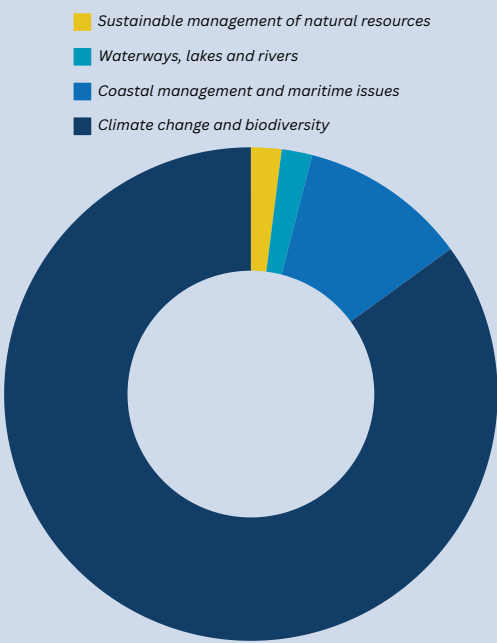
The highest concentration of such partners is found in:

- Italy-Malta (49%)
- Italy-Albania-Montenegro (31%)

# 2021-2027 PROGRAMME TRENDS

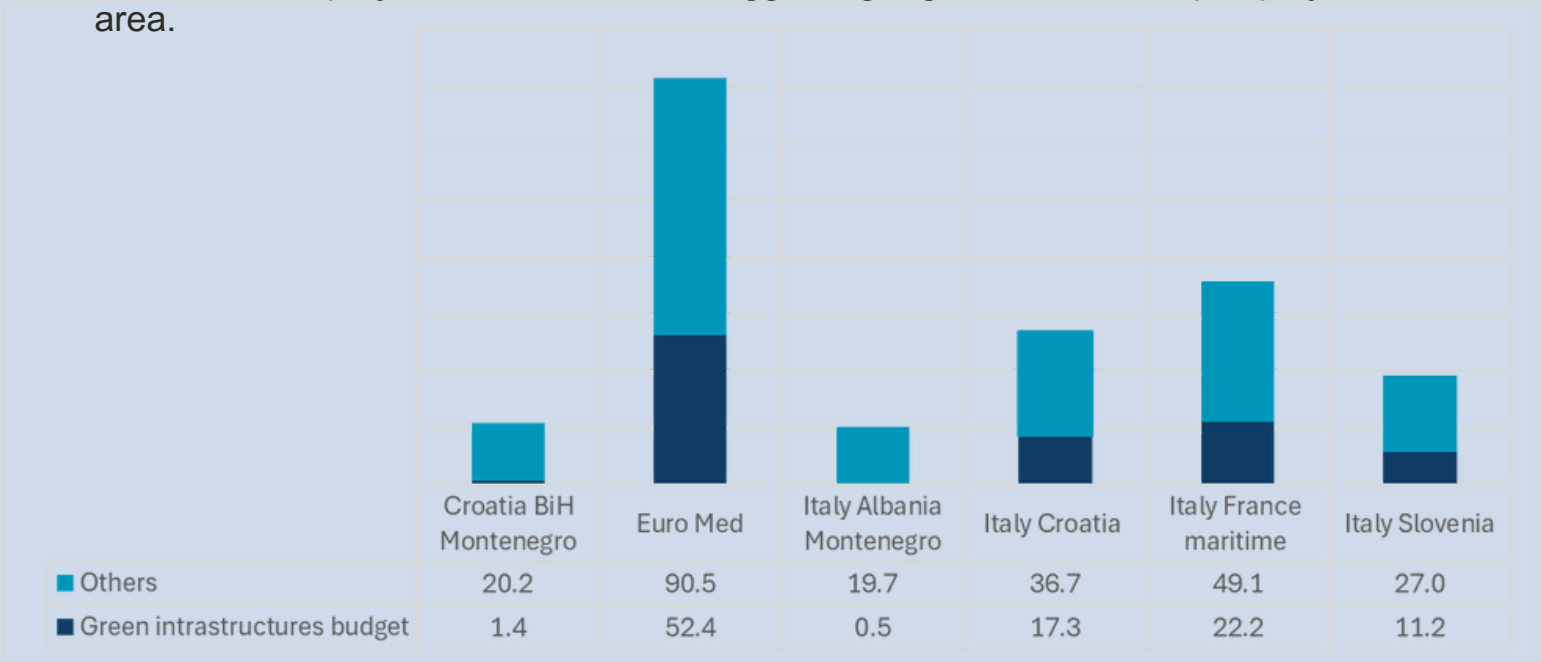
At the end of 2024, six Mediterranean programmes had uploaded project data for the 2021-2027 period, with 229 projects listed on [keep.eu](https://keep.eu).

- 55 of these (24%) relate to biodiversity, parks, and green infrastructure, an increase from 16% in 2014-2020.
- Most programmes have increased their focus on this sector, with exceptions in Italy-Croatia and Italy-Albania-Montenegro.
- Most 2021-2027 projects align with Climate change and biodiversity. It remains to be seen if this trend will mirror the 2014-2020 distribution.



Green infrastructures: projects per sector (21-27)

For the 2021-2027 period, the budget share so far contracted for green infrastructure projects is 29% (€100 million out of €348 million). This is significantly higher than the 16% share of projects in 2014-2020, suggesting higher investment per project in this area.



Green infrastructures project share in relation to the overall committed budget to projects (21-27). Data as of Dec 2024

Explore [keep.eu](https://keep.eu) yourself

The statistics presented here are not fixed; they can change based on filters and parameters used, and they evolve as more data from the 2021-2027 programming period is added. We encourage users to explore [keep.eu](https://keep.eu) and apply different filters to generate insights relevant to their needs.



# HIGHLIGHTS FROM PRACTITIONERS



## Broni Hornsby

About CORALLO project co-funded by Interreg Italy-Malta programme

We had seniors crying because they couldn't believe that there was such a coloured and rich world and wild life underneath the sea. They had no idea, and these were people from the area...



## Latifa Bousselmi

NAWAMED project co-financed by Interreg ENI CBC Med

Nature-based solutions for non-conventional water treatment are multidisciplinary systems that should be totally embedded in the local ecosystem and on the socio-economic context. If you would like to multiply it in other contexts it is in fact very important to co-design a tailor-made nature-based solution in participative way with all concerned experts and actors.



## Lorena Sassi

About the MEDS GARDEN+ project co-financed by Interreg Italy-Slovenia

These gardens are types of living laboratories for developing green skills and social skills [...] to cultivate these gardens in a sustainable way, with typical products cultivated for centuries in our culture.



## Daniela Guida

Concerning the MUSE project, dealing with small ports under the Interreg Italy-Greece

The concept of the port museum connects communities through our green infrastructure [...] coastal communities of our area and the other areas are interconnected, transforming these ports into vibrant centres.

# MEDLAB - FOR STRONGER COOPERATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN



© CORALLO project co-funded by Interreg Italy-Malta programme

## About the MedLab

[Seventeen Interreg programmes](#) operate in the Mediterranean Sea Basin. To maximise the impact and efficiency of EU funds, Medlab was established in 2020 to strengthen cooperation, foster synergies, and promote a fresh approach to territorial cooperation. It has progressively evolved into a platform for multilevel dialogue, bringing together stakeholders from various levels of governance.

Medlab started as a top-down initiative, co-led by the Commission, and bringing together heads of joint secretariats and managing authorities of the seventeen Interreg programmes working in the Mediterranean region, with WestMed and EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region.

In 2014-2020 the seventeen Interreg programmes active in the Mediterranean committed over two billion euros to advance joint solutions addressing challenges partners in the Mediterranean region face.

## Importance of cooperation

The Mediterranean region has entered a new era of European cooperation with the historic appointment of a dedicated Commissioner for the Mediterranean, Ms Dubravka Šuica. As highlighted by Simona Pohlova and Olivier Baudelet from DG Regional and Urban Policy, this shift from a sectorial to a geographical approach represents a significant political signal with immense potential.

DG REGIO colleagues stressed the need to avoid the “silos approach”, underlining how the various sectors are deeply interconnected, especially where the environment is concerned.

*Interreg projects play a key role in driving long-term initiatives, complementing other funding programmes, and mainstreaming policies for lasting impact.*

*Interreg's people-to-people approach remains the most effective strategy for tackling environmental challenges in the Mediterranean, while ensuring a shift in mindset among younger generations is crucial. It also stands out as an ideal tool for balancing territorial priorities, cross-border cooperation, and alignment with broader EU policies.*

# USEFUL LINKS



Key figures and statistics on the topic of the day (processed from the keep.eu database and available [here](#))



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[PREMIERE Seed-Funding Initiative](#) (MTÜ Kodukant Läänemaa) aims to support practice organisations during Horizon Europe proposal development phase targeting 2025-2026 calls.

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R&D [Mediterranean Initiative](#) as part of Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2024 and platform for Mediterranean cooperation: [Euro-Mediterranean Hub for R&I \(euromedhub-ri.org\)](#).

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In the Mediterranean region facing environmental challenges and growing demand for resources, the NAWAMED project has taken a unique approach to raising awareness and promoting Non-Conventional Water Resources (NCWR). You will find short videos [here](#).

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A travelling exhibition of posters and small models realised to tell the story of proposals for managing non-conventional water resources, bringing technical solutions directly to the people prepared by the ENI CBC Med project MEDWAYCAP can be downloaded [here](#).

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If you are interested in developing your own goal-oriented MEDWAYCAP Innovation Camps and future sustainable multilevel meetings, you can find the guide [here](#)

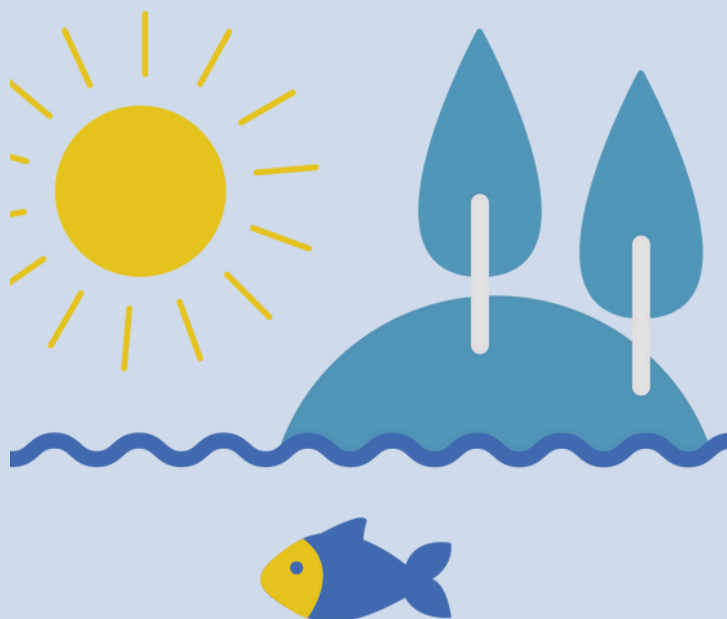
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# GET IN TOUCH

Interact, [interact.eu](https://interact.eu)

TESIM, [interregtesimnext.eu](https://interregtesimnext.eu)



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