

MEDITERRANEAN STORIES

All around the Mediterranean, communities and cultures have always offers an unparalleled wealth of nature and human diversity. The Mediterranean Day aims at highlighting people’s initiatives in the region’s achievements in sustainable development and the initiatives undertaken by all the organisations and stakeholders who work on a daily basis to strengthen cooperation and integration in the region.

<p>A NEW AGRICULTURE: DRONES TO SAVE WETLANDS</p> <p>Andrea Liverani</p>  <p>Images</p> <p>Only available for Q&A interviews</p>	<p>Andrea Liverani is a 24-years-old entrepreneur from Oristano, Sardinia, Italy. He is also a drone pilot. In the past two years, he has developed and implemented a system of precision agriculture to provide local farmers with the drone technology. Results show that irrigation based on drone-collected data can lead to a 30% water saving. This allows farmers to preserve the coastal wetlands of the Gulf of Oristano - the main agricultural “source” for the local population. Overall, the Gulf of Oristano boasts 7,700 hectares of wetlands of international importance (Ramsar Sites), which stretch along 200 km of coastline from Capo Mannu to the lagoon of Marceddì. These wetlands are rich in biodiversity and provide significant economic, social and cultural benefits. Saving water is crucial to preserve the treasure of Mediterranean wetlands, and in particular coastal wetlands. In Oristano, Liverani’s drones - which recently won the so-called Coldiretti green Oscar - are making this possible.</p> <p>In Sardinia and in other Mediterranean regions, for thousands of years, farmers used coastal wetlands for agriculture: from food and clean water to the retention of soil and the cycling of nutrients. But modern intensive agriculture led to the massive loss of wetlands in the last decades. Yet, recent studies show that sustainable agriculture can and must reconcile food security with the maintenance of wetlands. And farmers themselves can play a key role in changing the agricultural landscape for the better.</p> <p>For example, they can make their irrigation systems more efficient for the sake of coastal wetlands - like Liverani and his partners are doing in Italy with drones. Farmers might therefore be the game-changers in preserving the Mediterranean basin, extracting the limited water resources in a sustainable way and protecting areas of high cultural and biodiversity value. Such a scheme allows increasing food production while simultaneously improving the state of water resources by enhancing yields of rain-fed systems and strengthening the efficiency of irrigated systems.</p>
<p>INCREASED FOREST FIRES ACROSS THE REGION: THE MEDITERRANEAN IS REQUIRING STRONG</p>	<p>A former top-level track and field athlete, Captain Laurent Alfonso is a French professional fire officer. His long career has sent him to almost all</p>



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<p>MECHANISMS FOR PREVENTION</p> <p>Laurent Alfonso</p>  <p>Images</p>	<p>corners of the world to provide training, support or participate in major rescue operations, creating bonds and human connections along the way.</p> <p>In February 2022, in a small town near the city of Chefchaouen, Morocco, five-year-old Rayan Oram fell into an open well. As an EU Civil Protection expert, Captain Alfonso was in regular contact with the Moroccan team during the whole rescue operation. Captain Alfonso explains that civil protection relies on two main pillars: knowledge, action and cooperation aimed at protecting populations. Civil protection mechanisms must constantly adapt to be able to anticipate, prepare and respond to disasters in an effective and timely manner. Euro-Mediterranean cooperation on civil protection is of paramount importance. Since 2009, the “Euromed Programme of Prevention, Preparedness and Response to Natural and Man-made Disasters” (PPRD South) provides a regional cooperation framework on civil protection. Involved in this programme, Captain Alfonso highlights several advantages: with its regional scope, it covers a large geographical area. This project also allows for long-term planning and building around a common platform, while providing a holistic approach to the crisis management cycle in terms of prevention, preparation, response, and reconstruction.</p>
<p>FIRST SCIENTIFIC REPORT ON THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN</p> <p>Wolfgang Cramer</p>  <p>Images</p>	<p>The Mediterranean region is warming 20% faster than the rest of the world. If current policies are maintained, temperatures are expected to rise by 2.2°C by 2040. These are the alarming findings of the first-ever Scientific Report on Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean. Published by MedECC in 2020, the findings of this report have resonated in the latest COP27 of Sherm-el-Sheik. MedECC (Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change) is an open and independent network of more than 600 scientists from across the region, founded in 2015 with the support of the Union for the Mediterranean. Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Cramer, environmental geographer and global ecologist, is a research director in the CNRS and the Mediterranean Institute of Biodiversity and Ecology (IMBE) in Aix-en-Provence, France. In 2017, he was elected associate member of the Académie d'Agriculture de France. He is a contributor to many IPCC functions, and is currently working as lead author of its Sixth Assessment Report. Together with Joël Guiot, he coordinates the MedECC. Alongside them, Maria Snoussi, a Moroccan researcher specializing in coastal geosciences. She is the first woman and the first non-French personality to lead the scientific council of the French Institute of Research for Development (IRD). The Moroccan environmental scientist knows her native Mediterranean coasts like the back of her hand. The sharing of experiences among scientists from nearly all Mediterranean countries and the quality and outcomes of the report encouraged the Council of Europe to recognize the role of this scientist’s network in their annual Awards. The Mediterranean Sea is a fragile ecosystem that suffers</p>



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<p>Maria Snoussi</p>  <p>Images</p>	<p>from different ills such as biodiversity loss, overfishing, pollution, coastal degradation, and marine litter, among others.</p> <p>A potential for adaptation to these risks and for some mitigations of their causes are possible, but much stronger financial efforts are necessary. Policies for the sustainable development of Mediterranean countries are urgently needed to mitigate these risks but policymakers lack adequate information. The MedECC initiative is a leading example of the potential of the Euro-Mediterranean scientific and policy-makers' community working together creating solutions for a better future.</p>
<p>WOMEN'S DREAMS SHOULD NOT BE OUT OF REACH</p> <p>Asmaa Kherrati</p>  <p>Images</p>	<p>The limitation of the movement of people and goods, the closure of local markets, and changes in consumer practices during and after the pandemic has severely affected the 6.5 million women in Morocco and 1.8 million in Tunisia who work in rural food production. More than half of these women are informal workers without a contract, and therefore without access to social protection, healthcare or formal structures that would allow them to benefit from governmental support to mitigate the pandemic effects.</p> <p>Asmaa Kherrati is the FLOWER project's coordinator. The FLOWER project aims at sensitizing women workers to their socio-economic rights, to the health risks of the pandemic and to the opportunities available in terms of law, funds and market functioning, in order to obtain better working conditions, production processes, quality and food products' hygiene, distribution channels and access to local and national markets. Young local coaches are trained to mechanisms for accessing funds and business management, to further enable women's groups to learn about economic, business and financial approaches to crisis management. After several years in Senegal, Asmaa created with other co-founders the social enterprise "Enjoy Agriculture", which connects rural women working in agriculture with travellers from all over the world who wish to discover African culinary and agricultural traditions. After returning to Morocco almost two years ago, she noticed the progress in terms of gender equality. However, the differences are still not bridged between men and women in terms of empowerment and access to the labour market. Hence the importance of her role within projects such as FLOWER, which helps to empower women and, above all, to give them a role as "actors" in their lives, and not just as "spectators".</p>
<p>WOMEN'S ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN REGION</p>	<p>The MENA region continues to register one of the weakest female labour force participation rates globally, together with a women's unemployment rate that averages about 20%, more than twice as high as men's. In addition, relative to the rest of the world, the percentage of women entrepreneurs in the MENA region who own or manage businesses barely</p>



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<p>Manar Ramadan</p>  <p>Images</p>	<p>reaches 5%, compared to the global average of 23-26%. In order to stimulate the creation of business networks for young entrepreneurs and women-led businesses in the region, ARLEM brings together local and regional politicians drawn from the 42 countries of the Union for the Mediterranean showcasing successful examples of youth entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean region to inspire other young people while demonstrating the positive impact that local and regional authorities in Mediterranean partner countries can have on the entrepreneurial ecosystem; and illustrating how young entrepreneurs in Mediterranean partner countries actively take the future into their own hands by creating jobs and positively influencing the local economic development, thus establishing a positive narrative.</p> <p>Manar Ramadan founder of Banlastic Egypt, an environmental conservation company based in the city of Alexandria, has won the ARLEM Award for young entrepreneurs. Banlastic Egypt offers alternatives to single-use plastic bags and provides green services that foster awareness and responsible consumption, by supporting start-ups, by running campaigns, and through partnerships with local government and the public sector. Its overarching mission is to ban single-use plastics.</p>
<p>RECONCILING MOBILITY AND CLIMATE FOR EVERYONE</p> <p>Khadija Jallouli</p>  <p>Images</p>	<p>The RISE project aims to increase economic resilience and employment opportunities for vulnerable groups in Morocco and Tunisia by improving institutional, technical, social and economic conditions for innovative entrepreneurial activity, inclusive growth and job creation. It provides tailored employment-related capacity development and entrepreneurial programs, promote networks and dialogue among actors of the business ecosystem, support entrepreneurial activity and build capacities of MSMEs to enable income generation and job creation.</p> <p>Khadija Jallouli is the founder of HawKar, a socially innovative Tunisian startup, aimed at anyone who wants to have an adapted electric vehicle, especially dedicated to people with reduced mobility. The startup is conceiving and building a smart electric car that is directly accessible in a wheelchair, compact, economical & environmentally friendly. This car will enable people with reduced mobility to be autonomous. The end goal is to enable every disabled person to travel independently, freely, at long distances and allow people to go to work, study or shop. HawKar will solve the problems and failures of the infrastructure and public transport that are not suitable for people with a disability in Africa and the MENA region.</p>