

A topographic map of the Mediterranean region, showing the landmasses of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. The map is rendered in a light beige and tan color scheme, with blue lines indicating water bodies. The title is overlaid on the map in a large, bold, blue font.

CLIMATE ACTION AS A STRATEGIC PRIORITY FOR THE NEW PACT FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

A briefing facilitated by the Mediterranean Alliance of Think Tanks on Climate Change (MATTCCh), supported by **CREAF, ECDPM, ECCO, eco-union, E3G, EMEA, IEMed, IMAL, IPC, SEFIA, TEPAV, ZERO**

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Key points:

The New Pact for the Mediterranean is an opportunity to enhance EU-Southern Neighbourhood cooperation, with climate action a key pillar. Given the region's high exposure and extreme vulnerabilities to climate-related hazards and the importance of decarbonization for the region's future, climate action must be prioritized.

The Pact should feature flagship initiatives for regional climate change mitigation, including notably the ambitious vision for deployment of renewable energy toward 1 TeraWatt of installed capacity in the Mediterranean ("TeraMed"). Such ambition should be matched by investments in energy efficiency, grid modernization, region-wide electrification and cross-border electricity interconnections to accelerate a secure, affordable and just net-zero transition across the Mediterranean, in line with the COP28 UAE Consensus goals.

Resilience, adaptation to climate change, and response to climate-related loss and damage must be prioritized as a pillar of regional stability and security, with strong investment in water, energy, food, and ecosystem restoration and resilience through an integrated WEFE (Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem) approach, as well as investment in communities and resilient sustainable development to ensure social cohesion and provide alternatives to migration.

Enhanced cooperation between both shores of the Mediterranean to leverage respective areas of potential against intertwined economic, industrial and security challenges will be essential for achieving strategic objectives of European and Mediterranean countries in a difficult global context. For the EU, this requires expanding international climate finance flows, improving access to affordable finance for sustainable development, and aligning public funding with regional priorities.

To succeed, the Pact must embed climate action (including on nature) across all sectors while fostering inclusive governance with Southern partners to ensure shared ownership and durable cooperation.

Context:

The European Union's initiative to forge a New Pact for the Mediterranean, spearheaded by the newly established Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf (DG MENA), presents a critical opportunity to reshape the EU's engagement with its Southern Neighbourhood. This Pact aims¹ to establish a cooperation framework addressing the multifaceted challenges and shared development aspirations of the Mediterranean region today. With a focus on fostering common prosperity, security, and resilience, the Pact seeks to build comprehensive partnerships across various sectors. The European Commission intends the Pact to include a number of areas of mutual interest, such as trade, investment, economic stability, environment, energy, digital and transport connectivity, security, migration as well as climate mitigation and adaptation.

Climate change and climate action, and their cascading, cross-cutting effects on many other issues, including migration and security, make it a necessary consideration for establishing a strong and sustainable partnership across the Mediterranean.

This policy brief, facilitated by the Mediterranean Alliance of Think Tanks on Climate Change (MATTCCh), argues that for the New Pact for the Mediterranean to be truly fit-for-purpose and sustainable, climate action must be embedded across all priority areas, integrated into economic, security, energy and development agendas in a targeted and organic way.

To ensure that the New Pact for the Mediterranean comprehensively responds to the climate crisis, this policy brief identifies three essential pillars for enabling effective climate action in the region: (1) resilience, adaptation, and loss & damage; (2) mitigation, decarbonization, and net-zero targets; and finally, (3) cooperation and means of implementation.

¹ https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/24039223-f92e-40a0-a440-a27d9715051a_en?filename=Mission%20letter%20%C5%A0uica.pdf

1. Multidimensional climate-related resilience, adaptation to climate change, and response to loss and damage as a pillar of Mediterranean regional stability

According to the Sixth Assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Mediterranean region faces a variety of climate-related hazards. Projections indicate decreasing precipitation, extended droughts, more intense floods, reduced groundwater storage, and increased evaporation. The projected increase in climate hazards, in combination with the region's high exposure and vulnerability, makes it a prominent climate change hotspot.

These physical changes are not abstract environmental concerns; they are direct threats to the socioeconomic fabric of the region, which result in losses and damages today. The agricultural sector, a cornerstone of many Southern Mediterranean economies, faces significant risks from reduced water availability, rising temperatures, and shifting growing seasons, threatening food security and livelihoods. Reliance on food exports and imports will expose the region to global market volatility and disruptions.

Consequently, climate change acts as a multiplier² of existing social, economic, and political stresses, potentially fueling instability and undermining the very security, prosperity, and resilience the Pact seeks to achieve. The Pact should acknowledge the security implications of climate change, as the EU already has in the Joint Communication on the Climate-Security Nexus³, as well as the negative implications of conflict on resilience and climate action, while avoiding an understanding of security that is overly narrow and understood in terms of military solutions.

In this sense, the Pact needs to place a strong emphasis on resilient development and climate adaptation programmes, recognizing that mitigation and energy cooperation alone will not suffice to tackle the already unfolding impacts of climate change in the Mediterranean and their wider implications for global security. Initiatives focused on security should advance development cooperation, integrate climate risk assessments, and promote climate adaptation projects as tools for enhancing regional stability. To be truly transformative, cooperation must be rooted in a shift towards new regenerative economies, grounded in decarbonized and climate-resilient innovative diversified economic and business models as well as nature-based solutions that restore ecosystems and enhance biodiversity, while generating sustainable livelihoods.

² <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/c567ec58-ecda-4900-9c1f-c5afd5ce8f9f/content>

³ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/joint-communication-climate-security-nexus_en

A multidimensional approach to resilience is required, spanning infrastructure, communities, and economic development. This requires investments in infrastructure resilience, including energy systems, early warning systems and disaster risk reduction, as well as technical support and capacity building within Southern Mediterranean countries to develop and implement their own adaptation strategies, recognizing their specific vulnerabilities and needs. Special attention should be given to supporting vulnerable populations, ensuring their sustained access to essential services such as energy and water despite climate-related stresses. There is also a clear need to develop inclusive urban climate resilience strategies and projects in urban planning and urban development.

Similarly, while acknowledging the EU's legitimate concerns regarding security, the Pact should be careful to avoid an overemphasis on security and migration control conditionalities, which risk reinforcing perceptions of asymmetry. Instead, the Pact should promote balanced partnerships and climate, energy, adaptation cooperation programming that reflect the shared priorities of both the EU and Southern Mediterranean countries around peace and prosperity. A renewed alliance could help integrate countries in both shores of the Mediterranean in decarbonized value chains (greenshoring), assuaging concerns of neoextractivism and neocolonialism.

Building on the need for balanced adaptation, energy partnerships⁴ and climate cooperation, the New Pact for the Mediterranean must also prioritize the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem (WEFE) nexus within its agenda. It must place strong emphasis on the WEFE nexus within its agenda, as this approach is crucial for climate change adaptation by recognizing the interconnectedness of water, energy, food, biodiversity and ecosystems and their vulnerability to climate impacts. Beyond energy, it is vital to address water scarcity and food security challenges, especially in the agricultural sector, which is already driving significant domestic migration flows from rural to urban areas within countries due to the massive decline of water resources in Southern Mediterranean regions, and where water-intensive agricultural exports to Europe may pose additional challenges. Implementing an integrated WEFE framework enables the development of sustainable, cross-sectoral adaptation strategies that enhance resilience, optimize resource use, and improve economic stability.

Furthermore, collaboration on technology and innovation, including drawing on specialized knowledge, is essential to implement effective solutions, improve resource management, and support long-term climate resilience across the region.

⁴ https://euromed-economists.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/EMEA_Strengthening_EU-Southern_Neighbourhood_Relations_compressed.pdf

The EU should streamline its policy instruments and overcome silos to climate adaptation in the Mediterranean. This requires a more coherent approach under the New Pact that brings together resilience and external action under a unified framework, also leveraging the Union for the Mediterranean's existing platforms and strengthening coordination across DGs and instruments and structuring cooperation along the national, sub-national and local levels tailoring EU support to adaptation to local needs.

2. A vision for expanding renewable energy and net-zero development in the Mediterranean, including the 1 TeraWatt target for installed capacity

The Pact should seize the opportunity to unlock the potential for an interconnected, renewable-based energy system in the Mediterranean region capable of sharing electricity abundance, creating opportunities for net-zero industries, anchored in a strong and explicit commitment to climate action aligned with the Paris Agreement and the European Green Deal. Renewable energy is a key enabler, not only for reducing emissions and meeting long-term climate goals, but also for fostering economic transformation, diversifying and strengthening renewable energy investment supply chains, bringing down energy prices, strengthening energy security, and positioning the region as a hub for trade and innovation.

A flagship opportunity for the new Trans-Mediterranean Energy and Clean Tech Cooperation Initiative is to adopt the ambitious vision of tripling renewable energy in the Mediterranean to one TeraWatt of renewable energy capacity ("TeraMed"⁵), in line with the global tripling commitment undertaken by all countries at COP28 under the UAE Consensus. The vision is already backed by high-level partners, including IRENA, the Union for the Mediterranean, and the Global Renewables Alliance. According to analyses⁶, the TeraMed target could be within reach. Per Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), Mediterranean countries are supposed to double their installed renewable capacity by 2030, delivering an estimated 250 GW. However, to meet the 1 TW target, the current pace of renewable deployment must accelerate to close the projected gap of roughly 374 GW by 2030.

The Pact, and by extension the EU's Trans-Mediterranean Energy and Clean Tech Cooperation Initiative (T-Med), should:

- Recognize ambitious expansion of renewables at the level of 1 TeraWatt ("TeraMed") as an essential goal for climate action and cooperation toward shared security and prosperity across the Mediterranean region.

⁵ <https://teramedinitiative.com/>

⁶ <https://eccoclimate.org/setting-the-scene-for-an-interconnected-renewable-mediterranean-energy-system/>

- Seek to close the gap toward 1 TeraWatt of installed capacity through cooperation platforms and mechanisms promoting investments in energy transition, industrial co-development, storage, and grids to enable a flexible, renewable-based regional energy system, embedding local value creation, technology transfer and capacity building. Such delivery processes should envision independent monitoring of regional collective progress towards achieving the tripling goal.
- Support the development of the electricity grid and cross-border electricity interconnections as the foundation for regional integration and resilience in energy systems and a way to boost the energy security of countries across the region.
- Seek to ensure a just and inclusive energy transition⁷. As countries across the Mediterranean accelerate decarbonization processes, the Pact must ensure that climate and energy cooperation is designed to support local communities and workers through skills development, local job creation, and social protections. EU cooperation funds, investments, and projects should be tied to clear and measurable improvements in governance, transparency, and social outcomes and adhere strictly to the highest social and sustainability standards.

3. Mediterranean climate cooperation and ensuring climate finance

To translate its ambitions into real action, the New Pact for the Mediterranean should promote specific measures to enhance the availability, accessibility, inclusivity, and coordination of climate finance.

Crucially, the EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), including Global Gateway's financial envelope, must allocate sufficient resources to support enhanced climate cooperation within the Mediterranean region, including energy transition and other forms of mitigation as well as adaptation and resilience projects. The Better Futures Programme's inclusion of climate adaptation projects⁸ is an example of positive support that needs to be scaled up. Committing to an ambitious allocation of funds for Mediterranean regional cooperation within the MFF would significantly bolster the Pact's credibility.

On this basis, the Pact must align with EU and Member States' commitments at COP29 to scale climate finance, as well as wider commitments on climate finance under the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement, particularly grant-based and concessional finance through funds like the Green Climate Fund, which have an

⁸https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/news-and-events/news/eu-and-ifc-announce-eu291-million-guarantee-program-finance-global-gateway-through-support-private-2025-04-28_en

important role to play in Mediterranean countries and also improve the affordability of finance from multilateral development banks active in the region. These resources are especially relevant for Mediterranean partner countries facing acute adaptation and transition financing challenges. Efforts are also needed to reduce administrative burdens on recipients to improve access. Regional carbon finance and carbon markets, while distinct from climate finance, do hold considerable potential, although their impact may be negative if integrity and high quality is not guaranteed – these should not be a substitute for entity-level decarbonization.

In addition, as part of the efforts to turn the Pact into meaningful action, the EU can help to establish and fund country platforms or sector platforms aimed at mobilizing diverse finance sources for key agendas. These can play a matchmaking role in problem-solving regarding key barriers around derisking, aggregation, and mechanisms to mobilize private sector investments in renewable energy and green infrastructure.

The Pact should actively promote North-South, South-South, and triangular cooperation focusing on Mediterranean countries, facilitating the flow of climate finance as well as capacity building and technology transfer for climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. Cooperation should be designed to withstand the Mediterranean's evolving geopolitical landscape, which is marked by persistent tensions, economic disparities, and climate-related vulnerabilities.

The Pact should deliver a multilateral vision for the future of Mediterranean relations, overcoming siloed and fragmented dynamics. To do so, the Pact is also an opportunity to strengthen existing intergovernmental frameworks. Notably, the Union for the Mediterranean remains the only political forum convening and focusing on Mediterranean countries around a shared table for political and technical efforts, which can act as a regional forum to advance climate resilience and decarbonization, consolidating fragmented efforts. The Pact should promote structured cooperation with other institutions such as the League of Arab States and the African Union. In addition, the Pact should be firmly aligned with broader international frameworks such as the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement, as well as the Barcelona Convention and Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. In general, the Pact must champion multilateralism and adherence to international rule of law.

Given the existence of various overlapping international infrastructure development initiatives with a Mediterranean presence, the new Pact offers a unique opportunity to steer wider cooperation with the Southern Mediterranean and advocate for low-carbon and climate-resilient development pathways (e.g. renewable energy corridor) that align with the region's specific needs and priorities. Triangular (or trilateral) cooperation with Gulf countries should be strategically integrated into the Pact, leveraging convergence with the EU-GCC Cooperation on Green Transition Initiative. Gulf countries have significant institutional capital as well as fiscal resources and private wealth, combined with an appetite for engagement and investment in Africa and the Middle East. Additionally, the EU should explore opportunities for coordination with China, an unequalled player in terms of the production of low-cost green technology such as solar, which will be crucial in the Mediterranean region.

To support the implementation of effective, regionally tailored climate solutions, the Pact should also leverage and strengthen initiatives like the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA). As the largest EU research program focused on the Mediterranean, PRIMA plays a key role in developing science-based responses to regional challenges across the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem (WEFE) nexus. The Pact should recognize PRIMA's value in building shared scientific capacity, fostering local innovation ecosystems, and advancing evidence-based climate policy.

Cooperation must ensure the prioritization and inclusion of vulnerable populations such as youth, women, displaced persons, workers, and other marginalized communities; strengthening governance and accountability to build trust and transparency; and guarantee that EU-financed projects deliver tangible local economic and social benefits for communities, backed by robust socio-economic impact assessments that uphold decent working conditions and other rights for all participants.

Conclusion

The Pact is an opportunity to reforge the EU-Mediterranean relationship at a time when there is great potential for alignment on climate, resilience, security, energy, clean tech and industrial co-development.

The Pact must genuinely be a Pact for the Mediterranean, with the Mediterranean and by the Mediterranean. While ongoing consultations are a welcome opportunity, the Pact's legitimacy and long-term effectiveness will depend on genuine co-ownership by non-EU Mediterranean countries and other actors. Despite the tight timelines linked to the EU's schedules for the Pact, openly sharing information about the process of developing and implementing the Pact will be crucial to its success and its acceptance among Mediterranean partners.

This requires structured and regular participation processes that go beyond one-off events and seek to engage meaningfully and consistently with Southern governments and non-state actors over time, to better understand priorities. Multi-stakeholder forums should be established at various levels, ensuring the active participation of governments, civil society organizations such as think-tanks (including via the Mediterranean Alliance of Think Tanks on Climate Change), youth representatives, SMEs, local authorities, and academia, from the Southern Mediterranean region. This inclusive approach will ensure a wider diversity of perspectives and create a sense of ownership of the Pact.

Crucially, while enabling diverse stakeholders to voice their expectations and recommendations for the Pact is vital, it is equally important to be as transparent as possible on how these inputs and priorities will be considered, integrated, or possibly rejected by the European Union. Clear communication around decision-making processes, including how and when the EU provides feedback or requests further clarification, is indispensable for maintaining transparency and trust in the Mediterranean region.

About MATTCCh

The "Mediterranean Alliance of Think Tanks on Climate Change" (MATTCCh) is an initiative created by the MedCOP in 2023 in Tangier, Morocco, and then officially launched on the margins of the Mediterranean Green Week in 2024 in Istanbul, Türkiye, where it was recognized by the Union for the Mediterranean. The Alliance secretariat is led by Imal Initiative for Climate and Development (IMAL), based in Morocco, ECCO, based in Italy, and Sustainable Economics and Finance Association (SEFiA), based in Türkiye, with the support of Pooled fund on International Energy and European Climate Foundation.

The Alliance is structured with three main working groups, each corresponding to a key area of climate policy, in line with the Paris Agreement and its Global Stock-Take:

- Mitigation, decarbonization and net-zero;
- Adaptation, resilience, and loss & damage;
- Cooperation and means of implementation.

A detailed topographic map of the Mediterranean region, showing the landmasses of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. The map uses a color gradient from light beige to dark brown to represent elevation, with darker shades indicating higher altitudes and mountainous terrain. The Mediterranean Sea is a prominent feature in the center, surrounded by the landmasses. The map is oriented with North at the top.

Mediterranean Alliance of Think Tanks on Climate Change (MATTCCh)

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