



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 5.9.2006  
COM(2006) 475 final

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL AND THE  
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

**Establishing an Environment Strategy for the Mediterranean**

{SEC(2006)1082}

# COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

## Establishing an Environment Strategy for the Mediterranean

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Mediterranean is the largest European sea, uniting the people of the countries that share its waters. Their well-being depends upon the health of its environment. But despite nearly thirty years of international efforts to protect this unique ecosystem, it remains fragile and continues to deteriorate as environment pressures increase. On current projections, 50% of the Mediterranean coastline could have been built on by 2025<sup>1</sup>, just one illustration of the magnitudes of these pressures. Recent studies<sup>2</sup> have begun to quantify the cost of degradation of the environment in several countries<sup>3</sup>. Environmental degradation in Egypt was estimated to cost between €2.7 and €5.1 billion per year (or 3.2-6.4% of GDP), €1.5 billion per year (or 3.6% of GDP) in Algeria and €1.2 billion per year (or 3.7% of GDP) in Morocco.<sup>4</sup> Clearly, if the health of the region's people, and their economic and social development, are to be protected, inaction is not an option. Mediterranean countries must act now to safeguard their environment and properly manage their natural resources to the extent possible.

Over the last thirty years, numerous longstanding initiatives and organisations have identified the causes of the problems and developed strategies and actions for their solution. However, these strategies often remain unimplemented. Apart from the oft-cited problems of limited financial resources, one of the principal reasons for this inaction is low political priority given to the environment, inter alia translating into insufficient integration between environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainable development. A lack of inclusive environmental governance and limited public awareness of environment issues aggravate the situation. Furthermore, poor cooperation between the various actors from local to international has diluted the effectiveness of international assistance.

As no single country can be held responsible for the deterioration of the Mediterranean environment, no single country can protect it by acting alone. As a major regional player the European Union (EU) must play its role in protecting this common heritage but its limited resources mean that it cannot act alone. With the region's needs far exceeding the capacity and means to deal with them the Commission will need to concentrate its efforts and limited resources in those areas where it has clear added value and so should develop a realistic strategic approach to environment cooperation in the Mediterranean. Each of our partners in the international organisations, the donor community and, above all, the various actors and countries of both sides of the Mediterranean will need to make significant additional, and coordinated, efforts if the goal of a cleaner and healthier Mediterranean is to be achieved.

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<sup>1</sup> A sustainable future for the Mediterranean – The Blue Plan's Environment and Development outlook

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.metap.org/main.php?id\\_menu=12](http://www.metap.org/main.php?id_menu=12)

<sup>3</sup> Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, and Tunisia

<sup>4</sup> Another example of the costs of environmental degradation are the figures from the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS)<sup>4</sup> of the EC which show average losses of about 600,000 ha of forested areas in the EU Mediterranean region every year, with estimated costs of nearly €2 billion per year.

Success will ultimately depend on widespread political support translated into a clear determination to deploy the necessary resources to the task.

Countries bordering the Mediterranean can be grouped according to their political relationship to the EU. Current and potential EU Member States are making their most significant contribution to protecting the Mediterranean through alignment with EU environment policies and legislation and their effective application. The EU strategy for them is well defined and therefore the focus of this strategy will be those partner countries<sup>5</sup> in the group covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)<sup>6</sup>.

In November 2005, at the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Euro-Mediterranean Summit, the leaders of the partnership renewed their commitment to the process and refocused activities with the joint adoption of a five year work programme<sup>7</sup>. All countries of the region committed to increase efforts to substantially reduce pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by 2020 in what has become known as the 'Horizon 2020' initiative and called for the development of a feasible timetable to achieve this.

Following broad discussion<sup>8</sup> with relevant actors concerning Horizon 2020, the Commission has prepared this Communication with the aim to:

- Outline the Horizon 2020 initiative and make a first proposal, to be discussed with partners, for the feasible depollution timetable as an important step to fulfilling the political commitment taken in Barcelona.
- Outline how, in parallel to the Horizon 2020 initiative, the Commission can contribute to the protection and recovery of the Mediterranean through its broader cooperation, and how the Commission will seek to improve co-ordination with partner countries and other actors.

The approach will support the broader EU Maritime Policy<sup>9</sup> (and its environmental pillar the EU Marine Strategy<sup>10</sup>) that is being developed.

## **2. THE AIMS OF MEDITERRANEAN ENVIRONMENT COOPERATION**

With pollution free to move across the region there is clear interdependence between the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. Pollution from third countries has a direct impact on the EU and equally our pollution hurts our neighbours. Likewise, natural resources like water, air, soils and biodiversity are connected in complex ecosystems and through movements of goods, people and services; they thus have innumerable interdependencies warranting integrated and coordinated action. The Mediterranean can only be protected with a

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<sup>5</sup> Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria and Tunisia

<sup>6</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/index_en.htm)

<sup>7</sup> "Tenth Anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: A work Programme to meet the challenges of the next five years" COM (2005) 139 final

<sup>8</sup> This 'discussion' included inter alia a high level meeting on 19 December 2005 in Barcelona involving the national authorities, local and regional administrations, international organizations and IFIs, and representatives from NGOs and the business community, as well as an informal internet consultation on the Commission's Web page at [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/enlarg/med/horizon\\_2020\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/enlarg/med/horizon_2020_en.htm)

<sup>9</sup> Green Paper on "Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union: A European vision for the oceans and seas" of 7 June 2006, COM(2006) 275 final

<sup>10</sup> Communication from the Commission on the "Thematic Strategy on the Protection and Conservation of the Marine Environment" of 24 October 2005, COM(2005)504 final

coherent, functioning region-wide system of environmental protection and recovery. Through its environment cooperation with partner countries the European Commission stands ready to work towards this goal.

The basic aims of the Commission's environment cooperation with the Mediterranean countries are:

- To assist partner countries to develop functioning environment institutions and a sound, effectively enforced environment policy and legal framework that enables integration of environmental concerns into sectoral policies.
- To achieve measurably reduced levels of pollution, consistently applied across the region, leading to corresponding health benefits and in addition to reduce the impacts of uncontrolled activity on our natural environment.
- To promote preparedness of the environment administrations to address both emergency situations as well as punctual and long-term environment issues.
- To promote a more sustainable (economically efficient, socially appropriate and environmentally viable) use of the land and sea areas in the Mediterranean region.
- To promote a strengthened civil society, in which the public has access to environmental information, participates in environmental decision making and environmental awareness is enhanced.
- To encourage regional cooperation amongst partner countries to support these aims.

Achieving these goals will not only protect the environment per se, but contribute to long-term economic growth in the region.

### **3. MEANS TO REACH OUR GOAL**

The means available to the Commission for environment cooperation with the region are:

#### **3.1 Financial Assistance**

Potential European Community assistance for ENP partner countries will come from the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). Therefore all projects must demonstrate a clear link to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and the ENP Action Plans where they have been adopted. For global projects, limited Community funding is also possible from the future Thematic Programme on Environment and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources including Energy (ENRTP).

EU grant assistance will however inevitably remain small in comparison to investment needs of the region. Therefore pollution reduction projects will continue to receive the bulk of their financing through International Financial Institutions (IFIs) loans, contributions from other donors, national resources and other sources of finance. Future EC assistance will seek to maximise its catalytic effects, including with the IFIs through the targeted use of tools such as technical assistance and interest rate subsidies where appropriate, as they can lever larger levels of loan assistance. In addition, importance will continue to be attached to grants for

capacity building measures. Increased use of results from research could contribute to gains in cost-effectiveness.

### **3.2 Strengthening dialogue and ownership**

The European Union is engaged in a political dialogue with partner countries through the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the European Neighbourhood Policy. In recent years, a formal structure of sub-committee meetings under bilateral Association Agreements has been developed to facilitate this dialogue. The Commission will ensure that this structure is used to raise the profile of environment issues, also beyond the environment ministries (particularly those responsible for planning and finance) and to promote integration of environmental considerations into all relevant sector policies, including economic policy.

Commission activities in Mediterranean third countries must align with the goals of the European Neighbourhood Policy and any legal obligations towards third countries that arise from the body of EU law (the *acquis*), including international commitments, such as the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. The ENP Action Plans lay out the priority actions to be addressed by the EU and the partner countries. These Plans contain a number of environment actions aiming at enhancing environmental governance, addressing specific environment concerns as well as promoting international and regional environment cooperation. The EU and the partner countries share the ownership of these plans which are jointly adopted and implemented based on the priorities of each country and those of the EU.

Environment activities in the Mediterranean will also contribute to the implementation of the Action Plan for the Environment Initiative developed by the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and African Union (AU), with whom the EU has been in constant dialogue in the past few years.

Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are key actors in the development and implementation of environment policy often acting where government agencies are unwilling or unable to intervene. However their presence in the region is weak and there is a need to build NGO capacity to participate in political dialogue. The Commission will support the development and operation of regional NGO networks and contacts aiming to strengthen civil society with the development of a coherent regional approach and sharing of good practices. National NGO platforms will also be encouraged, including in relation to making more effective use of existing research results and prioritising future scientific cooperation.

The Commission will continue to attach the utmost importance to openness and transparency ensuring that its activities are not just restricted to contacts with national level stakeholders but reach out to involve all interested partners in development and implementation of environment policy such as local and regional authorities, civil society representatives and the business community.

### **3.3 Mechanisms to enhance coordination**

The Commission will work closely with the various partners to ensure that its activities are targeted on those areas where it has clear added value.

There are many organisations presently active in the environment field in the Mediterranean, in particular those linked to the Barcelona Convention<sup>11</sup> to which the Community is party and which is a cornerstone of cooperation efforts in the region.

The joint Mediterranean Action Plan<sup>12</sup>(MAP)/European Commission Work Programme signed in 2005 will ensure greater coherence between the activities of the two organisations in a number of priority areas including:

- Implementing the European Marine Strategy.
- Implementing the European Strategy for Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and ensuring consistency with ongoing work on an ICZM Protocol under the Barcelona Convention.
- Meeting targets related to pollution prevention and protection of biodiversity.

Cooperation will continue with the World Bank and the European Investment Bank in the context of the Mediterranean European Technical Assistance Programme (METAP). Memoranda of Understanding with the IFIs will be fully exploited to ensure better coordination of environment actions in the Mediterranean. Steps will also be taken to strengthen contact with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Strategic Investment Fund.

Stronger links with the above actors and with the various bilateral donors will be improved through the development of the Horizon 2020 Steering Group described later.

Better coordination between the actions promoted under the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technology (FP7) and those under EU external instrument will be ensured, including as concerns the needs for capacity building and research infrastructure, and use of research.

### **3.4 Transferring, adapting and applying EU experience**

The EU has much experience in addressing environmental problems in the Mediterranean, including in promoting sustainable production and consumption patterns and the integration of environmental concerns into other sectors. The EU can also share approaches that have been successful in different parts of Europe with all of the countries in the Mediterranean, adapted to their socio-economic contexts.

The TAIEX<sup>13</sup> instrument is now open to ENP countries. Therefore, in addition to its ongoing work to support capacity building in the candidate and other countries of South-East Europe, this facility will also allow the targeted transfer of EU environment experience and know-how according to the needs of the partner countries through activities such as workshops, study visits and expert visits to the countries. This instrument will be particularly useful in transferring and adapting EU Member State experience to the region to support the implementation of the commitments contained in the ENP Action Plans.

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<sup>11</sup> The Convention for the protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean

<sup>12</sup> Secretariat to the Barcelona Convention

<sup>13</sup> Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Instrument

The LIFE programme and the Short and Medium Term Action Programme (SMAP) have successfully supported many environment projects and experience has been acquired both in the partner countries and the EU on issues of relevance to the region. This experience will be made available to partner countries and interested stakeholders.

In the research field, many ongoing and recently completed projects under the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Research Framework Programmes are of particular relevance to the Mediterranean. Examples include projects addressing water issues under the EU Water Initiative's Mediterranean component and those covering accidental marine pollution, marine and coastal research and climate change impacts. The results of relevant projects are normally freely available and will be shared with the partner countries by the Commission using existing information diffusion networks and facilities, including the internet.

The Commission has recognized the challenges of promoting sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean<sup>14</sup> and has set up an expert Tourism Sustainability Group (TSG), with representatives of industry associations, trade unions/civil society, destinations representatives as well as Member State's administrations and international organizations. The TSG is expected to issue a set of proposals and recommendations by the end of 2006 and those of relevance will be shared with partners.

Experience will be exchanged between the conventions dealing with the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.

#### **4. HORIZON 2020**

The 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Euro-Mediterranean Summit gave the political mandate to develop an initiative to reduce pollution of the Mediterranean.

With the means at its disposal the Commission has identified areas where it can bring clear added value to contribute to the achieving the aims of environment cooperation outlined earlier.

There is a need to enhance coordination between the various actors to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of environment activities undertaken, including financial and technical assistance. The Commission is well placed to lead this effort.

Therefore, the Commission offers the Horizon 2020 initiative as its follow-up to the Barcelona Summit and a proposal for the requested "*feasible timetable*" is provided in the Annex to this Communication. This proposal is intended as a basis for further discussion with partner countries leading to its adoption by Euro-Mediterranean Environment Ministers at their third meeting in Cairo in November 2006.

Horizon 2020 will build on existing institutions and results, filling gaps where it can bring an added value. It will operate within the framework of existing and developing environment policy instruments, and support the implementation of the pollution reduction commitments undertaken in the framework of the Barcelona Convention. Based on the outcome of our discussions with the various partners it is proposed that Horizon 2020 activities be grouped under the following four components:

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<sup>14</sup> COM(2003) 716 "Basic orientations for the sustainability of European tourism"

- Pollution Reduction Projects

In collaboration with the beneficiary countries, the relevant International Financing Institutions, MAP and other stakeholders, a pipeline of projects will be developed to address, in the first instance, the priority sectors defined at the 10th Anniversary Euro-Mediterranean Summit namely municipal waste, urban waste water, and industrial emissions.

- Capacity building measures

Building on ongoing actions and initiatives, actions will be pursued to establish the necessary conditions for sustainable environmental protection of the Mediterranean, including through development of legislation, institutions and support for local authorities and civil society. Particular attention will be given to capacity building measures at local level. These actions will extend beyond the three priority sectors of the pollution reduction component.

- Research

Efforts will be continued in creating, sharing and communicating scientific knowledge supporting the aims of Horizon 2020. Activities will include dissemination of relevant knowledge accumulated under recent research and LIFE programmes, scientific cooperation under the forthcoming 7<sup>th</sup> Research Framework Programme, the Direct Actions of the Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), and international actions in the area of human potential.

- Monitoring, Steering, and Review

The European Environment Agency in cooperation with the statistical office of the European Commission (EUROSTAT), the Mediterranean Marine Pollution and Research Programme (MEDPOL) under the Barcelona Convention, the Euro-Mediterranean Water Information System (EMWIS), the European Commission and other relevant bodies will develop a “scorecard” to measure progress with Mediterranean pollution levels taking advantage of ongoing work at the European level.

A consultative steering committee, with a wide membership, will oversee the implementation of the initiative in all its pillars.

## **5. BROADER COOPERATION BEYOND THE SCOPE OF HORIZON 2020**

While Horizon 2020 will address the key issues related to pollution in the Mediterranean, by itself Horizon 2020 cannot fully meet all of the goals presented in section 2. For this reason, there is a need for further actions and initiatives to be pursued in parallel.

In line with the European Neighbourhood Policy and its Action Plans, as well as with the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, environment cooperation between the Commission and the Mediterranean partners will in the next years address the following issues that go beyond the scope of Horizon 2020:



- Full implementation of the ENP Action Plans (promotion of environmental governance, enhancing international and regional co-operation, integration of environmental and health concerns into various sector policies, as well as addressing specific environment and health concerns such as desertification, water and air quality, tourism, etc).
- Further integration of environmental concerns into relevant economic sectors, with a particular focus on those economic sectors which present high potential in terms of economic growth and employment generation.
- Global environmental threats such as climate change and biodiversity loss, as identified in the recent Communication proposing a thematic programme for sustainable management of natural resources<sup>15</sup>. Similarly, the Commission will continue to support the Mediterranean component of the EU Water Initiative, including its research component, as part of the EU contribution to the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals which are wider than those of Horizon 2020.
- Other regional priority issues such as environment and health hazards and accidents, soil degradation and ICZM will continue to be addressed.
- The use of Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment will be systematically promoted across the region.
- The production of relevant indicators will be promoted and sustained through existing regional statistical co-operation mechanisms (e.g. MEDSTAT Environment).
- The European Forest Fire Information System will be extended to the entire Mediterranean basin, in collaboration with FAO Silva Mediterranean.
- EU Member States will be encouraged to cooperate with neighbouring countries to implement those parts of EU environment legislation concerning cooperation with third countries. An example is the proposed Marine Strategy Directive<sup>16</sup>, whose scope is wider than the specific focus of Horizon 2020 and which can already draw on existing and on-going research.
- Cooperation will continue to promote the integration of environment considerations into other sectors. The Commission will finish its Trade Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) for the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area (EMFTA). The conclusions and recommendations will be integrated into the trade negotiations with partner countries.
- Work will continue to be pursued on important emerging issues such as drought, water scarcity and flooding as needs arise.
- The bilateral Association Agreements between the EU and the Mediterranean partner countries list other areas for environment cooperation.

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<sup>15</sup> External Action: Thematic Programme for Environment and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources including Energy – COM(2006) 20

<sup>16</sup> Proposal for a Directive establishing a Framework for Community Action in the field of Marine Environmental Policy (Marine Strategy Directive) COM(2005) 505

- Actions to promote preparedness in emergency situations, such as environmental accidents in the region.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The Mediterranean Sea can only be properly protected if all bordering countries assume their responsibilities to protect it and restore its ecosystems to the extent possible. The needs in environmental protection are beyond the means of many Mediterranean countries to deal with them. Equally donor assistance alone will not ensure a sustainable future. The goal of "de-polluting the Mediterranean" could seem out of reach given its huge financial implications but by focussing on the worst sites of the most significant polluting sectors and coordinating resources by working together it is possible to improve matters. In this era of limited resources it is imperative that the European Commission and other members of the donor community coordinate their efforts to ensure that the assistance given is properly targeted and used effectively without duplication of efforts.

Following the strategy outlined in this document the European Commission will seek to maximise the effectiveness of EC cooperation in support of not only its own priorities but those of its partners. It will use the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership to raise the priority attached to environmental protection across the region. Particular attention will be given to encouraging partners to implement environment measures to which they have already committed ensuring that strategic plans are translated into actions on the ground. Those partner countries that show the greatest readiness to work with the EU on environment issues should be those with whom the Commission moves ahead first. The Commission cannot take over the environment responsibilities of its partners but it can assist them to meet those responsibilities. Only by working together can we hope to protect our common Mediterranean heritage..