



CALL FOR SMALL PROJECTS

Nature-based Solutions to increase the resilience of Mediterranean ecosystems and populations.

- ✓ Albania
- ✓ Italy
- ✓ Montenegro
- ✓ Morocco
- ✓ Tunisia
- ✓ Türkiye

In the framework of the RESCOM project.



2024



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CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CALL

The Mediterranean basin is one of the richest regions in the world in terms of biodiversity, but it is also under pressure due to pollution, climate change, overexploitation of natural resources.

To face these challenges, the [Mediterranean Biodiversity Consortium](#) (MBC) is a coalition of regional environmental organisations with extensive expertise and work experience in the Mediterranean basin which join forces to protect more effectively the natural wealth of this biodiversity hotspot. The eight member organisations (1) intend to implement coordinated and complementary actions to better manage, enhance and protect the diversity of the region's exceptional and fragile ecosystems, which are often treated in 'silos' (sea, coastline, forests, small islands and wetlands).

Cofinanced by the French Global Environment Facility (FFEM, by its French acronym) and the MAVA foundation for a 4-year period, the RESCOM (2) project is the first initiative of the Consortium to test this new collaborative, integrated and multi-ecosystem approach, capitalising on the know-how, expertise and learning of each of its members.

RESCOM aims to strengthen the social and environmental resilience of natural areas in the Mediterranean, through the implementation of Nature-based Solutions (NbS), in close coordination with national and local stakeholders. It combines regional capacity-building activities, exchanges of experience and good practice, and advocacy for the integration of NbS into public policy, with concrete actions in six pilot sites in Albania, Italy, Montenegro, Morocco, Tunisia and Türkiye to demonstrate both the ecological and socio-economic benefits of implementing NbS.

In order to increase the **implementation of demonstrative and replicable NbS in the Mediterranean**, the Consortium is launching a Call for Small projects aimed at local environmental Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the six partner countries. This document sets out the guidelines for the Consortium's call, managed directly by IUCN-Med.

This Call for Small projects of the MBC is aimed at local environmental CSOs based in the RESCOM six partner countries: Albania, Italy, Montenegro, Morocco, Tunisia, Türkiye.

The programme will fund one project per country to implement Nature-based Solutions, with a contribution of 20,000 euros per small project.

(1) - It includes the International Association of Mediterranean Forests ([AIFM](#)), the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative of Ramsar ([MedWet](#)), the Mediterranean Network of Marine Protected Areas Managers ([MedPAN](#)), the Initiative for the Small Mediterranean Islands ([PIM Initiative](#)), [Tour du Valat](#), the Mediterranean Cooperation Centre of the IUCN ([IUCN Med](#)) and [WWF France](#), with the support of the French [Conservatoire du littoral](#).

(2) - RESCOM for its acronym in French : Strengthening the resilience of ecosystems in the Mediterranean.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Eligible entities

Grant recipients will be **local non-profit CSOs** active in the field of nature and environmental protection, established in accordance with the national legislation in force in one of the eligible countries and with its own governance **(3)**.

Applicant organisations must:

- have a legal status recognised by the national authorities, enabling them to receive grants;
- be able to provide accounting records and precise identification of their main past donors;
- be able to prove that they have carried out effective activities over the last two years and/or present minutes of governance bodies;
- have proven expertise in biodiversity conservation, sustainable development and project management.

Eligible countries and intervention areas

The eligible intervention areas are located in the six partner countries of the RESCOM project, namely **Albania, Italy, Montenegro, Morocco, Tunisia, Türkiye**.

Projects will have to be located **in areas with some form of protected status, i.e. within or on the edge of a protected area or an officially designated zone of high ecological value**. In addition, areas of intervention must include at least two different types of natural habitat (sea, coastline, small island, wetland, forest), to be in line with the **multi-ecosystem approach** promoted by the MBC, and with the aim of improving the ecological functions of natural areas considering a continuum of ecosystems.

Eligible topics

Are eligible all biodiversity conservation projects that improve the living conditions of local populations, in line with the concept of **Nature-based Solutions** as defined by the IUCN standard.

Nature-based solutions are defined by the IUCN as “actions aimed at protecting, sustainably managing and restoring natural or modified ecosystems in order to respond directly to societal challenges in an effective and adaptive way, while ensuring human well-being and benefits for biodiversity”.

(3) - Offices or branches of international organisations are not eligible.

The social challenges or issues include improving health, food security, water supply, socio-economic development, disaster risk and climate change adaptation and/or mitigation.

The following actions are thus eligible :

- preservation of functional ecosystems in good ecological condition;
- improving the management of ecosystems for sustainable use by human activities;
- restoring degraded ecosystems or creating new ones.

More information available in the [IUCN Guidelines on NbS](#) and using the [IUCN online self-assessment tool](#) to design NbS. (4)

Eligible and ineligible activities

Eligible activities include all activities necessary for the operational implementation of the NbS, using a participatory and inclusive process, guaranteeing involvement of the populations concerned, **in particular women and young people.**

Activities may involve :

- any studies prior to the works, provided that they are not the core of the project;
- work to implement NbS (actions in the field required to protect or restore ecosystems);
- consultation, communication and awareness-raising activities relating to the project;
- development and initiation of ecological monitoring measures (monitoring protocols, monitoring equipment, etc.);
- any other activity contributing to the success of the project.

Income-generating activities linked to the sustainable development of natural resources and biodiversity are also eligible, provided that a rigorous monitoring protocol for socio-economic and ecological benefits is put in place.

(4) - In addition, a webinar on NbS will be organised following the publication of this Call for Small Projects for interested applicant organisations (cf. section "Application and selection process").

Peer-to-peer, exchange of experience or training are taken into account if the immediate implementation of the acquired knowledge is planned during the project's timeframe.

The following activities **are not eligible** for funding:

- projects focusing mainly on seminars and training sessions;
- repetitive activities and the running costs of the organisation;
- development projects which main objective is not nature conservation;
- micro-credit activities;
- land purchase;
- advocacy campaigns not linked to conservation actions in the field.

Additional considerations

Each applicant organisation can submit only one project proposal. The latter may concern a new project or a contribution to an existing initiative in which the applicant organisation is already involved, provided that it falls within the scope of eligible actions and activities.

The small project is led and managed by the main eligible applicant organisation but may involve the participation of other public and private partners for implementation, which must be indicated in the application form (5).

Pre-selected CSOs will have to attach to the Full Application Form (Phase II – cf. section “Application and selection process”) a **signed letter of institutional support** from the competent public authority (be it local, provincial or national) in the area of intervention, to ensure effective implementation of project activities within the limited timeframe, and with the necessary administrative authorisations if required.

(5) - If this is the case, the selected CSO will have to use IUCN templates for consultancy agreements (external contractors) and/or implementing agreements (implementing partners) during the implementation phase.

DURATION AND START OF THE PROJECTS

The average duration of the small projects will be of **12 to 18 months**.

The small projects are scheduled to start no later than **May-June 2025**.

Activities will have to be completed and all expenditure incurred by **November 2026**.

FUNDING TERMS

Funding amount

The Mediterranean Biodiversity Consortium will contribute **€20,000** to each small project, corresponding to a **maximum of 90% of the total budget** of the small project.

Under this Call for Small Projects, the financial envelope available will enable the funding of **6 small projects** (one per eligible country).

Co-funding requirements

Co-financing of at least 10% of the total budget of the small project is required, which may be provided **in kind or in cash**, either by the applicant CSO or by another financial partner of the CSO.

The sources and amounts of co-financing must be clearly shown in the total budget for the small project, according to the format defined in the application form **(6)**.

Eligible expenditure includes all disbursements relating to project activities that can be recorded and justified by means of supporting documents, invoices, etc., from the date of notification of the award of the grant. Among the eligible expenses, the organisation's internal staff costs **must not exceed 40% of the total budget requested** (excluding co-financing).

These expenses may also include indirect costs, encompassing operating costs, material expenses (not directly linked to the project), structural costs of the CSOs, as well as human resources (not directly assigned to the project) **up to a limit of 10% of the direct costs of the project**.

(6) - Note that a letter of commitment to co-financing will be requested during the contracting phase with the CSOs finally selected.

APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

The project selection process is planned in **2 phases**.

Phase I: Pre- selection of small projects

Each grantee can only submit one application under this Call.

Application:

- Applications must include the **Brief Application Form** dully filled following the provided template either in French or in English, as well as the legal statutes of the applicant association (i.e. publication in the Official Gazette or any other document proving the existence of the organisation). Late or incomplete Applications will be rejected directly.
- Phase I applications should be submitted by **December 8 at 11:59 pm CET** at the following email address: **apply@medconsortium.org**, adding in cc:
 - Yaprak Arda, IUCN-Med responsible for this Call (Yaprak.Arda@iucn.org), and
 - Marion Douchin, RESCOM project coordinator (douchin@tourduvalat.org).
- Any questions concerning the Call for Small Projects can be sent to the same email addresses **before November 30**.
- **Informative sessions** on the guidelines for the Call for Small Projects and on Nature-based Solutions will be organised during November to support the preparation and submission of the Brief Application Forms (see below the Indicative timetable).

Evaluation:

- IUCN will first check the eligibility of completed proposals received on time and reject those that do not meet the eligibility criteria, as defined in these guidelines and section I of the Brief Application Form.

- The evaluation of eligible proposals will be conducted according to the following evaluation criteria using a scoring grid :
 - **Project relevance:** project justification (the project is in line with the objectives defined in the Call, responding to conservation and societal issues in the intervention area);
 - **Project coherence:** objectives and activities address the issues identified; activities are well calibrated and prioritised and are in line with the priorities of the Call (NbS implementation, multi-biome approach, gender equality consideration (7));
 - **Expected results:** tangible and realistic results must be presented, obtained with the resources allocated and in the expected timeline;
 - **Sustainability:** demonstration of the project continuation prospects and exploitation of results.
- The evaluation of the Brief Application Forms and project pre-selection will be conducted by the Selection Committee, composed of members of the MBC and the Facilitation team of the RESCOM project.
- Pre-selection results will be announced via email and on the [MBC website](#). Pre-selected projects will be invited to submit a Full Application Form (Phase II).

Phase II: Final selection of small projects

Application:

- Applications must include the Full Application Forms dully filled following the provided templates either in French or in English and the institutional support letter from the public authorities responsible for the management of the intervention area, and any relevant additional administrative documents.
- Phase II applications should be submitted by **March 30 at 11:59 pm CET** (see indicative timetable below) at the following email address: apply@medconsortium.org, adding in cc:
 - Yaprak Arda, IUCN-Med responsible for this Call (Yaprak.Arda@iucn.org), and
 - Marion Douchin, RESCOM project coordinator (douchin@tourduvalat.org).

(7) - For further information on how to mainstream gender issues in projects, please refer to the IUCN guidelines: [MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN UICN \(iucn.org\)](#) on IUCN policy, and [Gender equality | IUCN](#)

- Support may be provided to pre-selected CSOs during this phase by IUCN-Med and the RESCOM project Facilitation team for project set-up and by members of the MBC if deemed necessary depending on the expertise required. The support provided to each pre-selected CSO will be reasonably calibrated according to the number of pre-selected organisations and the availability of the RESCOM team.

Evaluation:

- The evaluation will be conducted according to the following evaluation criteria using a scoring grid:
 - Project relevance;
 - Internal consistency: activities are consistent with the project's objectives, budget and timeline; indicators are well-defined and expected results are tangible, realistic and in line with the priorities of the Call (NbS implementation, multi-biome approach, gender equality consideration);
 - Methodology: technical and logistical aspects are described; protocols are clear and replicable;
 - Sustainability and replicability: sustainability of the activities implemented once the funding has ended, taking into account the risks identified; the potential for replicability of the measures implemented;
 - Estimated budget is realistic and coherent, the resources allocated to each activity are detailed and clear;
 - Quality and diversity of the project team (distribution of roles and skills).
- The evaluation of the Full Application Forms and final project selection will be conducted by the Selection Committee (same composition as for Phase I).
- Final selection results will be announced via email and on the [MBC website](#).

INDICATIVE TIMETABLE

The provisional timetable for the Call for Small Projects is as follows:

Actions	Date / Deadline
Launch of the Call	October 28, 2024
Webinars on the guidelines of the Call (with Q&A) (1 hour) in <u>English</u> and <u>French</u>	November 12th 2024, 10:00 CET (EN) November 12th 2024, 14:00 CET (FR)
Webinar on the NbS concept (with Q&A) in <u>English</u> with French interpretation (3 hours)	November 19th 2024, 10:00 CET
Submission and receipt of Brief Application Forms	December 8, 2024
Publication of Phase I results and launch of Phase II	January 31, 2025
Submission and receipt of Brief Application Forms	March 30, 2025
Publication of Phase II results	April 30, 2025

IMPLEMENTATION OF SMALL GRANTS

The IUCN-Med is responsible for the implementation of the Call for Small Projects.

Selected grantees will sign an **Implementing Agreement with IUCN**. For projects involving several partners, only one beneficiary (the main CSO submitting the project proposal) will sign the Agreement and receive the project funds.

Project beneficiaries will receive a manual of procedures as an appendix to the Agreement, for the proper implementation of the small project (for monitoring, awarding contracts and communication, among others), which should be in line with the requirements of IUCN and the FFEM (main donor of the RESCOM project).

The funding for each project will be paid in **3 instalments**. For information only:

- 40% funding upon signature of the Agreement,
- 50% after the submission and validation of the interim technical and financial report according to a specific template,
- 10% after submission and validation of the final technical and financial report according to a specific template.

All projects will be subject to systematic **interim and final technical and financial reports**, following a provided template. The IUCN and the RESCOM Facilitation team will help project beneficiaries with their self-assessment and report preparation. Reports and deliverables will be validated by the IUCN, the RESCOM Facilitation team and relevant MBC members depending on the ecosystems represented (to be defined at a later date).

The RESCOM partners and the Facilitation team will directly monitor each project progress. At least one site visit will be made during the small project timeframe.

The IUCN can terminate the Agreement of a project if the project is not launched within 2 months after signature, in which case the IUCN can reallocate the funds to another project. In this case, the beneficiary is required to reimburse the full first instalment to the IUCN. A follow-up meeting will be organised between IUCN and each grantee 2 months after signature of the Agreement.

If a key activity or deliverable is not validated by the IUCN during the interim or final report, the project could be considered unsuccessful. In this case, the beneficiary may have to reimburse all or part of the funds to the IUCN, depending on the situation.

If the project is unfinished, the beneficiary may have to reimburse unspent funds to the MBC, depending on the situation.



Oued Ezzen National Park, Tunisia. ©Martin Fillot / AIFM



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