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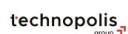
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MENTORING & TWINNING PROGRAMME: METHODOLOGY AND DOCUMENTATION

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Abbreviations

C4I	Community4Innovation
CoP	Community of Practice
D4I	Dialogue4Innovation
ISE	Innovative Sustainable Economy
ISEC Hub	Innovative Sustainable Economy Community Hub
M&T	Mentoring & Twinning
MIO-ECSDE	Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development
RIS3	Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SCE	Social Cooperative Enterprise
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SSE	Social and Solidarity Economy
TP	Thematic Project



Executive summary

The **Mentoring & Twinning (M&T) Programme**, part of the Innovative Sustainable Economy (ISE) Mission under the Interreg Euro-MED Programme, is a flagship initiative that fosters the transfer, adaptation, and replication of sustainable and innovative practices across the Mediterranean. Coordinated by MIO-ECSDE with the support of Community4Innovation (C4I) partners, it focuses on capacity building, cross-regional cooperation, and the capitalisation of Thematic Projects' (TPs) outputs.

Through a mix of online and in-person activities, the programme facilitates effective mentorship, mutual learning, and knowledge exchange between Thematic Project partners ("*givers*") and stakeholders ("*takers*") working to advance an innovative and sustainable Mediterranean economy. Emphasis is placed on engaging the Southern Mediterranean and countries which do not directly benefit from the Interreg Euro-MED Programme, in line with the programme's goals of transnational cooperation, sustainable development, and long-term impact.

This document outlines the programme's objectives, methodology, structure, activities, timeline, and deliverables. It will be updated iteratively with contributions from all partners and insights from implementation. It also presents the first Action Plans of the initial four takers, in the form of short reports that summarise agreed priority activities within the M&T framework.



Introduction

Overview

The **Mentoring & Twinning Programme** is a key transfer activity of the ISE Mission. Its primary purpose is to foster mutual learning, professional exchange, and the replication of successful sustainable solutions across the Mediterranean basin. By offering a tailor-made, targeted, and personalized approach to capacity-building, the programme empowers Mediterranean innovators and practitioners to adapt and replicate proven solutions in their own local contexts, thereby contributing to a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable regional economy.

The programme is led by MIO-ECSDE, in close coordination with Community4Innovation and its partners. It builds directly on the capitalisation outputs of Thematic Projects within the ISE Mission, ensuring that practical experiences and validated results are translated into concrete skills and tools for wider use. These TPs cover [critical thematic areas](#) such as:

- **Marine Resources**
- **Agri-food Systems**
- **Industrial Transition**
- **Resource Valorisation**

Together, these areas represent the main drivers of a circular, sustainable, and innovative Mediterranean economy. By linking the M&T Programme to these outputs, participants gain direct access to tested solutions, good practices, and replicable models that address urgent environmental, social, and economic challenges of the Mediterranean.

In parallel, the programme is closely interwoven with the [ISEC Hub \(Innovative Sustainable Economy Community Hub\)](#) —a dynamic platform that functions as a knowledge repository, matchmaking mechanism, and coordination space for stakeholders across the ISE ecosystem. Within the ISEC Hub, the M&T Programme is embedded under the **LEARN Pillar**, which focuses on knowledge transfer, capacity development, and skills strengthening.

The ISEC Hub also serves as the central reference and showcase platform for capacity-building activities. Here, the M&T Programme is displayed alongside complementary, and it is linked to the broader Knowledge Repository that houses the ISE Mission's accumulated resources. Through this digital space, the Hub ensures visibility, accessibility, and structured dissemination of outputs. At the same time, it continues to collect expressions of interest from stakeholders eager to participate to the M&T, fostering a growing community of practice around sustainable innovation



in the Mediterranean.

The primary objective of the M&T Programme is to strengthen the capacities of Mediterranean key target groups—namely Business Support Organizations (BSOs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and Public Authorities (PAs). By equipping these actors with both the knowledge and the competencies to absorb and apply the solutions catalogued in the ISE Mission's [Catalogue of ISE Solutions](#), the programme ensures that knowledge transfer goes beyond static dissemination. It emphasizes that successful replication requires not only accessible content but also capable recipients—stakeholders who are prepared to interpret, adapt, and implement solutions within their specific regional and institutional contexts.

To ensure impact, the M&T Programme employs a **matching-specific approach** that combines online and onsite exchanges. These exchanges are tailored to:

- The **type of output** being transferred (e.g., technical solution, governance model, business practice).
- The **type of stakeholder or solution-taker** (e.g., BSO, NGO, PA).
- The **regional or thematic context** (ensuring relevance and adaptability).

This structured matching mechanism ensures that each learning and exchange activity is purpose-driven, context-sensitive, and results-oriented, thereby increasing the likelihood of successful replication and long-term uptake of innovative solutions across the Mediterranean.

Objectives

- **Capacity Building:** Enhance the skills, knowledge, and institutional readiness of a wide range of stakeholders—including public authorities, SMEs, NGOs, research centres, and business support organisations. The programme ensures that these actors are well-prepared to adopt, adapt, and mainstream innovative and sustainable practices within their respective contexts, strengthening the foundations of a circular and resilient Mediterranean economy.
- **Facilitate Knowledge Exchange:** Promote two-way knowledge flows between “*solution givers*” (Thematic Projects and innovators) and “*solution takers*” (target stakeholders), ensuring that validated practices, lessons learned, and implementation insights are shared, discussed, and refined. This process not only supports replication but also generates feedback loops that improve the quality, adaptability, and scalability of sustainable solutions.
- **Promote Cross-Regional Collaboration:** Foster North-South cooperation across the



Mediterranean, encouraging the creation of lasting partnerships, peer-to-peer networks, and collaborative initiatives. By bridging regional differences and building on complementarities, the programme strengthens collective capacity to tackle shared challenges while reinforcing a common Mediterranean identity for sustainability and innovation.

- **Provide Operational Guidance:** Offer personalised mentoring and hands-on support to help stakeholders contextualise, pilot, and implement sustainable solutions. This operational guidance ensures that innovative practices are not simply transferred but are adapted to local realities, increasing their relevance, ownership, and long-term impact.

Approach

The approach of the M&T Programme is structured, flexible, and tailored to the needs of takers, while drawing on the expertise of givers. It combines mentoring, twinning, stakeholder engagement, and capacity building in a way that ensures relevance, adaptability, and long-term uptake of solutions.

Stakeholder Engagement and Matchmaking

Community4Innovation, supported by the ISEC Hub, plays a central role in identifying takers, assessing their needs, and matching them with appropriate givers (TP partners). Potential takers are identified through previous engagement activities of the ISE Mission, online surveys, promotion in key Mediterranean events (e.g. UfM MED Talks) and targeted outreach campaigns. Matchmaking is based on thematic relevance, stakeholder type, motivation, prior experience, and readiness to engage. This ensures that partnerships are targeted, mutually beneficial, and aligned with the objectives of both sides.

Tailor-Made Mentoring

Each giver-taker pair co-develops an **Action Plan** (while allowing for the engagement of external mentors when specific technical or thematic expertise is required for the implementation of the actions) which defines objectives, challenges, collaboration methods, and preferred modes of engagement. Plans are dynamic, allowing for regular adjustment to the takers' evolving needs. Mentoring is delivered through:

- **Online Sessions:** Flexible, on-demand engagements for dialogue, monitoring, and troubleshooting.
- **In-Person Sessions:** Organised alongside major events such the ISE Communities of



Practice (CoPs)¹ or regional workshops, providing networking and visibility.

- **One-on-One Guidance:** Personalised support to navigate barriers, contextualise solutions, and strengthen implementation capacity.

This targeted mentoring ensures takers gain not only access to knowledge but also the skills and confidence to apply solutions effectively.

Twinning

Twinning activities establish direct, collaborative exchanges between givers and takers, fostering trust, mutual learning, and practical uptake. Activities include:

- **Site Visits & Field Exchanges:** Hands-on exposure to solutions at pilot sites, engaging directly with implementing teams.
- **Online Exchanges:** Webinars, bilateral meetings, and thematic discussions on replication pathways.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** Continuous exchange of good practices, lessons learned, and critical “dos and don’ts.”

Through twinning, stakeholders move beyond abstract concepts to real-world application, enhancing the chances of replication.

Hybrid Engagement

The Programme applies a hybrid model that combines online and in-person exchanges. This ensures continuous interaction across the Mediterranean—even when travel is limited—while also capitalising on the immersive learning experiences that site visits and in-person exchanges provide.

Capacity Building

Complementary capacity-building workshops (integrated into or aligned with Mission events) strengthen technical, financial, managerial, and policy-related skills of takers. Topics may include:

- Operational adaptation and contextualisation.
- Stakeholder mobilisation and engagement strategies.
- Technical feasibility and validation processes.
- Policy alignment and compliance frameworks.

Workshops equip stakeholders with the tools necessary to embed and scale innovative solutions

¹ [1st ISE CoP Report](#)



within their own contexts.

Monitoring and Adaptive Management

A continuous feedback loop is built into the methodology. Regular check-ins, satisfaction surveys, and structured reporting allow the Programme to adapt its processes, refine mentoring/twinning practices, and ensure activities remain relevant and impactful.

Target Participants

Givers

The primary givers are the partners of Thematic Projects² under the ISE Mission, who bring tested, validated, and transferable solutions addressing key sustainability challenges in the Mediterranean. In addition, external experts may be engaged as mentors on a case-by-case basis, particularly when highly specialised knowledge or thematic expertise is required to support the successful adaptation and uptake of solutions.

Takers

Takers are the stakeholders who will benefit from and implement the transferred solutions. They include public institutions, NGOs, research centres, SMEs, clusters, business support organisations, and other relevant actors from across the Mediterranean, with a particular focus on stakeholders from the Southern Mediterranean.

Activity Information

Start Date: January 2025

Deliverables and Outputs

- **Deliverable 2.5:** Comprehensive documentation of the mentoring and twinning process, outcomes, and reflections.
 - **Version 1 (June 2025):** This present document, together with the initial mentoring and twinning report, including taker–giver pairings and first action plans.
 - **Version 2 (June 2027):** A cumulative report with updates from all thematic areas, integrating new Thematic Projects and additional taker–giver pairs. This version will also include a review and update of the present document.

² [Our Projects](#)



- **Version 3 (June 2029):** A final report capturing the full scope of mentoring and twinning activities, documenting outcomes achieved, and consolidating lessons learned across all TPs of the programming period.

The M&T Programme contributes to:

- **Output 2.1:** Evidence of uptake of solutions by takers, in alignment with broader transfer goals such as RIS3 support, technology acceleration, cluster cooperation, and SME internationalisation.

Partners' Contributions

The activity is led by MIO-ECSDE. In this role, MIO-ECSDE:

- **Identifies potential takers** in collaboration with Community4Innovation and other Activity Leaders, ensuring alignment with the objectives and outputs of the TPs.
- **Facilitates mutually agreed partnerships** between givers and takers, based on the relevance of solutions and the readiness of participants.
- **Supports logistics, coordination, and communication** between givers, takers, and the ISEC Hub, ensuring smooth implementation.
- **Provides financial or in-kind support**, where possible and based on the external budget allocated to each partner, to incentivize participation and reduce barriers to engagement.

The Mentoring & Twinning Programme will operate with a **total external costs budget of €60,000** for the duration of the ISE Mission. This budget will cover all eligible costs related to the organisation and implementation of mentoring activities, twinning exchanges, and the preparation of deliverables and reports throughout the project period.



Phases

The Mentoring & Twinning (M&T) Programme will be implemented in **four main phases**, each building on the previous one. The timeline ensures a logical progression from preparation and piloting to implementation, reporting, and long-term follow-up and assessment.

The Programme is closely linked to the evolution of the ISE Mission. It kicked off with 14 approved Interreg Euro-MED Thematic Projects and will progressively expand to include the additional projects approved, reaching for the time being, 23 TPs. To allow TPs sufficient time to consolidate partnerships, agree on work plans, and begin implementation, the M&T Programme will start engaging them approximately one year after their launch.

1. Planning and Piloting (6 months)

Objective: Establish the operational framework, identify givers (TP partners) and initial takers (Mediterranean stakeholders), and pilot the M&T approach.

- **Kick-off (1st month):** Starting on January 2025, organize a preparatory online meeting with all project partners to present the programme's framework and workplan, agree on roles, key milestones, and validate the Mentoring & Twinning Methodology.
- **Identification of 4 takers (1st - 3rd month; ongoing):** Community4Innovation, in collaboration with partners, identifies potential takers (ideally one per thematic area, including at least one from the Southern Mediterranean). An online survey (in English and French) to collect expression of interest from interested stakeholders from across the Mediterranean and take advantage of key Mediterranean events to publicize the activity. Develop a communications campaign (social media, newsletters, videos, etc.) with the Mission's Communications Partner, REVOLVE, to further publicize the activity and identify interested stakeholders. The **ISEC Hub – LEARN Pillar** will serve as the main platform to collect expressions of interest and showcase participating takers.
- **Bilateral meetings with ISE TPs (2nd - 4th month):** Conduct online meetings with the TPs of each of the 4 current focus areas of the Mission (namely Marine Resources, Agri-food Systems, Industrial Transition, and Resource Valorisation). The focus will be to align the goals of the M&T Programme with their project activities, identify key transferable outputs,



and set expectations for collaboration. Identify ready and willing givers from among the TP partners, ensuring alignment between the takers' expression of needs and the solutions to be transferred.

- **Readiness assessment (4th month):** Evaluate potential takers' alignment and capacity using criteria such as stakeholder type, thematic relevance, prior experience, participation in capacity-building activities, communication skills, and motivation. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to exploratory online meetings to further discuss the M&T and assess willingness to participate to the programme.
- **Action Plans Development (5th - 6th month):** Co-develop mentoring plans for each giver-taker pair, including objectives, scope, engagement modalities (online/in-person), and thematic priorities. Online workspaces will be established to facilitate collaboration and serve as repositories.
- **Letters of Agreement (LoA) (6th month):** Draft and sign LoAs to formalise mutual commitments between the ISE Mission and takers, specifying roles, responsibilities, and benefits.

2. Implementation (12 months)

Objective: Facilitate the transfer of knowledge, best practices, and hands-on guidance through both online and in-person exchanges. The below described exchanges are suggestions of what their type and nature could be according to the plans the takers have developed with the givers.

- Structured mentoring sessions (bi-monthly or as needed)
- Online and in-person exchanges tailored to each pairing
- Capacity-building workshops (leveraging Mission events)
- Site visits and field trips to showcase real-life applications
- Regular check-ins and adaptive planning to address challenges

Key milestones:

- **Additional Round of identifying Takers** (Sep 2025): New taker identification for the initial 14 TPs.
- **New TPs Onboarding** (Jan 2026): Onboard 9 new TPs, organize bilateral meetings to formally present the M&T Programme and discuss their participation, and pairing of givers and takers, ensuring balanced representation across thematic areas and both North and South Mediterranean regions.



3. Documentation and Reporting (17 months)

Objective: Capture results, assess effectiveness, and provide recommendations for future scaling.

- **Deliverable 2.5:** Cumulative report documenting givers/takers, challenges, success cases, and recommendations, to be delivered after at least one year of M&T implementation.
- **Evaluation tools:** Satisfaction surveys with participating stakeholders and entities to assess the quality, impact, and added value of the Programme.
- **Learning consolidation:** Insights from mentoring and twinning activities are analysed and shared to improve future rounds.

4. Finalisation and Follow-Up (2 years / end of project)

Objective: Ensure sustainability, scale-up, and wider dissemination of results.

- Continued mentorship for scale-up and institutional uptake.
- Systematic **knowledge capture and dissemination** within the ISE Mission and to broader Mediterranean stakeholders.
- Promotion of results through events, dissemination campaigns, and storytelling tools (e.g. videos, interviews).
- **Final Cumulative Report (June 2029):** Consolidating outcomes, success stories, and lessons learned across all Mission Thematic Projects.



Workplan

Introduction

In line with the methodology and timeline of the Mentoring & Twinning Programme, 4 initial takers were identified during the first semester of 2025. These organisations were selected through a structured matchmaking process coordinated by Community4Innovation, based on their thematic relevance, readiness, and motivation to engage in knowledge transfer and collaboration with TP partners.

The four takers actively participated in the **3rd ISE Community of Practice** in Sarajevo (April 2025)³, where they had the opportunity to present their work to participating TPs and Mediterranean stakeholders. This served as a first step in building trust, fostering exchanges, and ensuring visibility of their activities within the ISE Mission ecosystem.

Following the CoP, **Letters of Agreement** were signed with each participating taker, formalising their commitment to the Programme and clarifying roles, responsibilities, and expected benefits. Subsequently, a series of bilateral meetings was organised to co-develop their **Action Plans** presented below, together with the designated reference points of the M&T within each paired TP. These plans set out the objectives, scope of collaboration, preferred modes of engagement according to activities to be implemented, and priority areas for knowledge transfer and adaptation.

The **ISEC Hub** serves as the central platform for showcasing the takers' work, while also facilitating visibility and exchange with the wider community. To support dissemination, **short interviews with the takers** were recorded, highlighting their motivations, expectations, and initial experiences within the Programme.

To ensure effective coordination and monitoring, a shared **online repository** has been established, enabling partners to store relevant documents, meeting notes, and resources. In parallel, **internal shared spreadsheets** are used to track progress, record meetings and decisions, and facilitate reporting across all participating entities.

The following section presents the **first Action Plans** of the takers. These plans provide a framework for structured collaboration, monitoring, and adaptive learning. They represent the initial step of a dynamic process that will evolve during the implementation phase (July 2025 – June 2026), with regular updates reflecting progress, challenges, and lessons learned.

³ <https://innovative-sustainable-economy.interreg-euro-med.eu/2025/04/10/the-ise-community-meets-in-sarajevo-for-the-3rd-cop-gathering/>



Action Plan between REVIVE and AgroID



AgroID– TAKER Organisational Profile

[AgroID](#) Social Cooperative Enterprise (SCE), based in Crete, is dedicated to digital empowerment, innovation, and sustainable development in rural territories. Its mission is to bridge the digital divide in agriculture and rural life through smart farming solutions, Internet of Things automations, and monitoring systems that support farmers in diverse sectors, including olive oil, vineyards, mushrooms, apiaries, poultry, citrus fruits, and greenhouses. AgroID also contributes to civil protection by developing off-grid communications, disaster-mapping tools, and coordination systems for first responders.

The cooperative's work extends beyond technology, with strong emphasis on social inclusion and community empowerment. AgroID runs initiatives that address digital illiteracy, support vulnerable groups such as Roma communities, and promote reskilling and upskilling. By combining agrifood innovation with sustainable tourism, circular economy, and rural revitalisation strategies, AgroID fosters diversified income opportunities for small communities. Through the ISE Mission's Mentoring & Twinning Programme, AgroID is committed to testing and transferring innovative models, such as Rural Revitalisation Centres, to build resilient, inclusive, and competitive rural ecosystems across the Mediterranean.

Konstantinos Papadakis – Individual Profile

Konstantinos Papadakis is the Co-founder and Chairman of AgroID SCE and a resident of Epano Vatheia, a rural village in Crete. He is a social entrepreneur deeply engaged in advancing the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) at both the national and European levels. He currently serves as Chairman of the Union of SSE Organisations of Crete (CretanSCENT), Vice-President for European Policy and International Relations of the Panhellenic Confederation of SSE Associations (PA.S.E. K.A.L.O.), and representative of PA.S.E. K.A.L.O. in the European Commission's Expert Group on Social Economy and Social Enterprises (GECES). He is also an Ambassador of the Social Economy Platform (DG GROW/DG EMPL), a member of the General Assembly of Social Economy Europe, and a member of the Monitoring Committees for both the Operational Programme "Crete" 2021–2027 and the Rural Development Programme 2023–2027.

Through these roles, he advocates for resilient, innovative, and community-driven solutions that



strengthen rural areas, enhance social inclusion, and accelerate the green and digital transitions. His motivation lies in ensuring that small villages and internal Mediterranean territories can thrive again through collaborative models, capacity building, and innovation transfer—values that also lie at the heart of his contribution to the ISE Mission’s Mentoring & Twinning Programme.

REVIVE – GIVER Project Profile

REVIVE works to revitalise rural and remote areas through community-based, cooperative, and circular business models. It promotes the development of local innovation cooperatives as drivers of sustainable growth, ensuring that rural territories can thrive while preserving their natural and cultural heritage.

Its methodology provides a structured, step-by-step framework that guides stakeholders through the process of building territorial business models, strengthening partnerships, and implementing local action plans. By combining policy review, stakeholder engagement, and practical training, REVIVE empowers rural actors to build resilient ecosystems adapted to their territorial needs.

Priority Activities

The partnership between REVIVE and AgroID will focus on three core activities designed to foster rural revitalisation, policy adaptation, and innovation in Mediterranean territories.

1. Policy Context Analysis for Rural Revitalisation

AgroID will compliment a review of existing rural-focused policies in Greece and the wider Mediterranean, with emphasis on social and technological innovation, circular economy, and regional strategies. This policy mapping will inform the adaptation of best practices to the Greek context and feed into the REVIVE framework. By identifying enablers and bottlenecks, this activity will strengthen the design of community-based business models and support the development of more resilient rural ecosystems.

2. Implementation of the REVIVE Methodology

The REVIVE project’s 7-step methodology will be applied by AgroID to guide the creation of rural innovation cooperatives and social enterprises. This structured approach provides a roadmap for planning, stakeholder mobilisation, local engagement, and monitoring. By following the methodology, AgroID will test the replication of territorial business models, develop tailored action plans, and integrate context-specific strategies on collaboration, digitalisation, local



marketing, and immersive rural experiences.

3. Participation in Study Visits and Training Activities

AgroID will actively participate in interregional capacity-building opportunities organised by REVIVE, including study visits to sites where successful rural business models are already in place. The upcoming visit to Mallorca (11-12 November 2025) will provide insights into practical implementation, stakeholder engagement, and cooperative governance. In addition, AgroID will benefit from training sessions on supporting rural development, thereby enhancing its own capacity to adapt and apply innovative solutions within the Cretan and broader Greek context.



Action Plan between GREENSMARTMED and B-Hub, Birzeit University



Birzeit University, B-Hub – TAKER Organisational Profile

The **Business Hub (B-Hub) at Birzeit University** represents a pioneering initiative in Palestine, created to provide innovative and effective solutions to some of the most pressing challenges facing the Palestinian economy. These challenges include the prevalence of unsustainable small businesses, harmful environmental practices, and persistently high youth unemployment. Established in 2016 with funding from the European Union, B-Hub has since become an integral part of Birzeit University, embodying the institution's mission to connect academic excellence with societal impact.

B-Hub is designed to support both aspiring entrepreneurs and existing small and medium enterprises. Its services extend across diverse sectors, including small-scale manufacturing and agri-tech, ensuring that entrepreneurial opportunities and support are accessible to individuals of all ages, educational backgrounds, and professional stages. A distinguishing feature of the B-Hub is its unique operational model, which actively engages university students under the supervision of qualified professionals in solving real-world challenges faced by local companies. This model produces a dual benefit: companies gain practical solutions to critical operational bottlenecks, while students acquire hands-on experience that enhances their employability and gives them direct access to job opportunities. In this way, B-Hub not only supports private sector growth but also nurtures the next generation of skilled professionals in Palestine.

Central to B-Hub's approach is the promotion of social responsibility and environmentally sustainable practices. The organisation recognises that the Palestinian context is characterised by unsafe ecological conditions, social inequalities, and unfair employment practices, and it therefore seeks to embed sustainability into all aspects of business support. Importantly, B-Hub's solutions are designed to be cost-effective and feasible, ensuring that companies are not burdened with additional financial obligations.

The Hub's core green services reflect this philosophy. They include the greening of products through the substitution of hazardous ingredients with safer alternatives; the greening of operations through waste management optimisation and reductions in energy and water use; and the adoption of green business models by all startups from the earliest stages of their operations. Through these services, B-Hub contributes not only to the economic resilience of Palestinian enterprises but also to the environmental and social wellbeing of the wider



community.

Olga Batran – Individual Profile

At the heart of B-Hub's success is its Director, Olga Batran, a highly experienced private sector development professional with more than eighteen years of expertise in business planning, business modelling, and innovative marketing strategies. As both a business mentor and a leader, she brings a strong vision for entrepreneurship and sustainability in Palestine.

Batran holds a degree in Business as well as an Executive MBA from Northwestern University in Chicago, equipping her with a robust international perspective and advanced management skills. Over her career, she has guided numerous entrepreneurs and small businesses, helping them to develop viable strategies for growth, resilience, and innovation. In her current role, she is responsible not only for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the Hub but also for ensuring its strategic alignment with Birzeit University's broader mission of social impact and sustainable development.

Her work is particularly focused on nurturing youth entrepreneurship, embedding sustainability into local business practices, and bridging the gap between academic research and private sector needs. By combining local insight with global experience, Olga plays a crucial role in positioning B-Hub as a model for university-led entrepreneurial support in challenging socio-economic environments.

GREENSMARTMED– GIVER Project Profile

The **GREENSMARTMED** project is dedicated to strengthening circular economy practices across Mediterranean territories, with a particular emphasis on enhancing the sustainability and competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises.

GREENSMARTMED achieves its objectives by developing and sharing comprehensive methodologies and toolkits designed to guide SMEs in greening their operations and business models. It also establishes working groups in key manufacturing sectors such as food, polymers, textiles, agri-food, and machinery, which provide platforms for knowledge exchange and regional cooperation. Training sessions, mobility schemes, and peer-to-peer exchanges are central to its approach, ensuring that learning is not only theoretical but also practical and contextually grounded.

Priority Activities

The collaboration between GREENSMARTMED and Birzeit University is structured around a set of agreed activities designed to maximise learning, ensure practical outcomes, and create pathways for long-term cooperation. The partnership builds on shared priorities in sustainable



innovation and education, with a particular focus on contextualising European experiences for the Palestinian environment and strengthening cross-Mediterranean exchange.

Birzeit University will engage as an active taker in the **GREENSMARTMED Thematic Working Groups**, focusing on the food and polymer sectors. These groups will serve as entry points to explore opportunities for adapting European practices to the local context. To facilitate participation, an evaluation will be conducted to determine which meetings can be held in English, thereby enabling broader involvement of Birzeit's faculty and students.

Another key component of the partnership is the **access to GREENSMARTMED's outputs**, including methodologies, toolkits, and training materials. These resources will be shared with Birzeit University and adapted to support local initiatives such as entrepreneurial mentoring and SME support activities coordinated by B-Hub. By embedding these tested approaches into its programmes, Birzeit University will be able to strengthen its capacity to promote innovation and sustainability in Palestine.

Mobility and exchange opportunities form a cornerstone of the Action Plan. Faculty members, students, and staff will participate in site visits to Italy and explore possibilities for peer-to-peer exchanges with European universities. Discussions are also underway on establishing student exchange programmes, enabling Palestinian students to gain exposure to international learning environments and collaborative research. These exchanges are expected to enhance mutual understanding, foster new collaborations, and open avenues for joint innovation.

The partnership also prioritises **training and education**, with particular attention to language accessibility. Relevant training materials developed by GREENSMARTMED will be translated into Arabic to ensure they are widely accessible within Palestine and across the Mediterranean. This step is essential for overcoming language barriers and ensuring that sustainable practices can be adopted at scale across the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The Action Plan includes four main areas of collaboration:

- **Engagement in Working Groups (Sep 2025 – Jun 2026):** Birzeit University will participate in online meetings of the GREENSMARTMED Working Groups, with a particular focus on food and polymer sectors, supported by partners such as CETH, ZREDA, POLYMERIS, and UCBL.
- **Access to Key Outputs (Sep 2025 – Jun 2026):** GREENSMARTMED partners (UNIBG, AFIL, EURECAT) will share methodologies, toolkits, and training materials with Birzeit University, providing guidance on their application in local initiatives.
- **Mobility and Exchange Opportunities (Sep – Dec 2025):** Site visits to Italy and peer-to-peer exchanges will be organised with partners including UNIBG, UCBL, AFIL, and CUEIM. Student exchange opportunities will also be explored.



- **Training and Education (Sep 2025 – Jun 2026):** Key training materials will be translated into Arabic and disseminated through B-Hub, ensuring their accessibility and usability for local stakeholders.



Action Plan between BLUE ECOSYSTEM and ISPRA



ISPRA – TAKER Organisational Profile

The [Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e la Ricerca Ambientale \(ISPRA\)](#) is Italy's leading public research institute dedicated to environmental protection, conservation, and sustainable resource management. Functioning under the Ministry of the Environment and Energy Security, ISPRA plays a central role in providing the scientific basis, technical expertise, and regulatory support necessary for the effective design and implementation of national and European environmental policies.

ISPRA's mandate covers a wide range of activities essential for safeguarding ecosystems, biodiversity, natural resources, and public health. The institute is responsible for monitoring and reporting on environmental conditions across Italy, covering air, water, soil, biodiversity, and marine environments. It produces data and assessments that not only inform national policy but also contribute to EU directives and international agreements such as the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. In addition, ISPRA undertakes research and technical studies that directly support the implementation of European legislation and international commitments, ensuring that Italy's strategies align with global sustainability goals.

The institute also plays a key role in risk management, addressing challenges related to natural hazards, pollution, climate change, and invasive species. In the field of resource management, ISPRA promotes the circular economy, sustainable fisheries, and innovative approaches to land, water, and waste management. Its work increasingly incorporates nature-based solutions that integrate biodiversity conservation with human development needs.

Through its long-standing experience in collecting and disseminating environmental data, ISPRA ensures that policymakers, researchers, and the public have access to reliable and transparent information. It has also made important contributions to European research projects, which focus on achieving Good Environmental Status for marine ecosystems. With expertise in marine litter, biodiversity conservation, and climate adaptation, ISPRA is recognised as a cornerstone institution at the interface between science, policy, and environmental practice.

Tomaso Fortibuoni – Individual Profile

The mentoring and twinning partnership will be supported at ISPRA by Tomaso Fortibuoni, who brings significant expertise in marine environmental management and sustainable fisheries. His professional focus is on linking human activities, natural resources, and ecosystem health, ensuring that environmental sustainability is embedded within economic development strategies, particularly in marine and coastal areas.



Tomaso is actively involved in European projects, including [GES4SEAS](#), which aims to achieve Good Environmental Status in European seas, and [TETHYS4ADRION](#), with river and marine litter reduction in the Adriatic-Ionian region. His contributions have centred on supporting the shift to a sustainable and circular economy, with special attention to the fisheries and marine sectors. He has also worked on addressing pressing challenges such as marine litter, biodiversity loss, and the impacts of climate change on marine ecosystems.

Beyond research, Tomaso plays a vital role in strengthening the science-policy interface, ensuring that decision-makers have access to the technical and scientific evidence they need to develop effective conservation strategies. His motivation is to enhance ecological resilience by integrating sustainable economic approaches with biodiversity protection, contributing to the planning of green and blue infrastructures that support both human livelihoods and ecosystem health.

BLUE ECOSYSTEM – GIVER Project Profile

The [BLUE ECOSYSTEM](#) initiative engages key stakeholders across the quintuple helix—including industry, government, academia, civil society, and environmental NGOs—through a transformative and territorial co-creation model. The project enables each participating region to identify its most pressing blue economy challenges in alignment with its Smart Specialisation Strategy, to launch calls for transformative innovation, and to establish regional accelerator laboratories—known as TRAIN labs—which support the adoption and scaling of innovative solutions within their local blue economies.

In its latter phase, BLUE ECOSYSTEM organises a transnational open innovation programme called BLUE ECOMATCH, where experiences and lessons from each regional pilot are shared, compared, and mutually enriched. The outcomes of this exchange are then consolidated into a comprehensive “blue book,” serving as a capitalisation tool and a guide for future transformative innovation initiatives across the Mediterranean blue economy.

Priority Activities

The collaboration between BLUE ECOSYSTEM and ISPRA is structured around a set of concrete priority activities that reflect both the project’s strategic objectives and ISPRA’s institutional strengths. These activities ensure that the twinning goes beyond knowledge transfer, allowing ISPRA to embed BLUE ECOSYSTEM’s methodologies into its ongoing work while simultaneously contributing scientific expertise and policy-oriented insights.

1. Open Call for Innovation Proposals

ISPRA will participate in the upcoming Open Call for innovation activities, coordinated by the



Emilia-Romagna Region as part of the BLUE ECOSYSTEM framework. This call support new ideas in innovation, networking, and sustainability across the Mediterranean blue economy. ISPRA will play a key role in reviewing and advising on proposals, ensuring that selected initiatives are aligned with rigorous environmental standards and can deliver real impact in marine protection and sustainable resource management.

2. Participation in Italian TRAIN LABs

As part of the project's co-creation methodology, ISPRA will join the Italian TRAIN LABs, which serve as accelerator laboratories for innovation, skills development, and peer learning in blue economy sectors. ISPRA's involvement will focus on bringing robust data, monitoring expertise, and environmental analysis into the design of solutions tested within the labs. This participation will allow the institute to test methodologies in real contexts, collaborate with stakeholders across the quintuple helix, and adapt best practices to Italy's specific marine governance and environmental priorities. ISPRA will participate in the relevant thematic working groups according to its expertise, ensuring that knowledge and insights are shared and applied consistently across the project's activities.

3. Access to BLUE ECOSYSTEM Deliverables

Through the mentoring and twinning arrangement, ISPRA will gain privileged access to the deliverables and outputs produced within the BLUE ECOSYSTEM project, including methodological frameworks, toolkits, and reports. These resources will provide practical guidance on fostering sustainable innovation in the blue economy and will be reviewed and adapted by ISPRA for application in the Italian context. By integrating these tools into its work, ISPRA will enhance its capacity to link environmental science with economic innovation, thereby strengthening its role as a bridge between research, policy, and practice.

4. Transnational Networking Event

At the conclusion of the project, ISPRA will participate in a dedicated transnational networking event designed to bring together stakeholders from across the Mediterranean. This will be an opportunity to exchange experiences, share lessons learned, and explore opportunities for future collaboration. For ISPRA, this event represents a platform to showcase its contributions, build new partnerships, and position itself as a central actor in Mediterranean blue economy initiatives.

5. Emerging Opportunities and Regional Engagement



In addition to these planned activities, ISPRA will remain open to emerging opportunities for dialogue and cooperation. As highlighted in their communication, participation in major Mediterranean events such as ECOMONDO 2025 (04–07 November) and engagement with the BLU-ER Strategic Forum on the Blue Economy in Emilia-Romagna will provide valuable avenues to connect with stakeholders, co-organise thematic panels, and deepen regional collaboration.



Action Plan between OliveOilMedNet and Agro Cedrus



Agro Cedrus – TAKER Organisational Profile

Agro Cedrus is a rural social enterprise based in Menjez, Akkar (Lebanon), dedicated to sustainable agriculture, circular economy models, and inclusive rural development. Its mission is to transform native Mediterranean crops—particularly organic carob and olive—into high-value, innovative products while creating economic opportunities for women and youth in one of Lebanon's most underserved regions.

The enterprise works across eco-friendly farming, artisanal food production, research and development, and training for smallholder farmers. It promotes regenerative practices and agroecology to improve ecosystem resilience and food security. Central to its approach is a commitment to zero-waste and the valorisation of traditional crops, ensuring both environmental protection and economic sustainability.

Participation in OliveOilMedNet represents for Agro Cedrus an opportunity to strengthen technical capacity in olive oil production, certification, and marketing, while also contributing practical experience and innovative approaches to the Mediterranean network. The collaboration supports Agro Cedrus' ambition to empower local communities, preserve agrobiodiversity, and develop sustainable markets for Lebanese olive oil.

Georges Youssef – Individual Profile

The mentoring and twinning partnership with Agro Cedrus is led by its founder and CEO, Georges Youssef, who also served as the mayor of Menjez in Akkar, Lebanon. He combines experience as a public servant with entrepreneurial expertise in sustainable socio-economic, environmental, and cultural development. As founder of Agro Cedrus SARL, he has spearheaded efforts to promote the cultivation of carob and olive trees and to introduce innovative, natural sweeteners and ingredients to international markets.

He has committed to supporting OliveOilMedNet by hosting study visits to Menjez and the Tripoli Chamber of Commerce laboratories, mobilising Lebanese laboratories for genetic, chemical, and organoleptic analyses, and identifying funding sources to sustain olive oil activities beyond the project's lifetime. His leadership ensures that Agro Cedrus will be a serious and active partner, dedicated to implementing the Action Plan.

OliveOilMedNet – GIVER Project Profile

OliveOilMedNet is designed to foster a smarter and greener Mediterranean olive oil sector. The project's core mission is to promote sustainability and authenticity by testing, validating,



and implementing innovative eco-friendly concepts—originating from prior research—through pilot activities that lead to Sustainable Innovative Solutions deployable across diverse territories and user groups. By bridging policymakers, producers, academia, and civil society in a 4-helix model, OliveOilMedNet strengthens the capacity of national, regional, and local authorities, as well as olive oil producers, to create more competitive, authentic, and green olive oil products.

The project is anchored in three key streams:

- **Varietal & Authenticity Assessment**

Identification and certification of botanical identity, organoleptic and quality traits, and geographical origin of extra-virgin olive oils across Mediterranean cultivars, using advanced classification models.

- **Ecological Techniques & Technological Innovation**

Introduction of eco-friendly cultivation methods, sustainable technologies for groves and mills, and socio-economic and environmental evaluation tools.

- **Stakeholder Network Development**

Building an innovative network across the olive oil value chain that promotes sustainable practices, fosters peer learning, and strengthens climate resilience.

Priority Activities

1. OliveOilMedNet Network

Agro Cedrus has formally signed of a Declaration of Interest to be member of the OliveOilMedNet Network with allows access to the networking activities. The Network will be established until the end of year after the finalisation of the MoU that will be discussed during the Transnational Hybrid Round Table on the MedOliveOil Network. In addition, Agro Cedrus will be registered on the OliveOilMedNet networking platform. Registration provides access to the e-library, e-forum, and e-training resources. It also facilitates active participation in peer-to-peer exchanges with other producers.

2. Participation in Key Events

Agro Cedrus has confirmed its participation in the Hybrid Peer-Learning scheduled for September 2025, organized by the University of Jaén. Agro Cedrus will actively contribute by sharing experiences from Lebanon and engaging in dialogue with Mediterranean peers. Furthermore, Agro Cedrus has expressed interest in participating in the Hybrid Peer-Learning and Demonstration Events, as well as in the Capitalisation Workshop, which will be organized



until the end of the project.

3. Input to the Olive Data Bank

Agro Cedrus will explore possibilities of contributing to the use of the Authenticity Digital Software by entering data on Lebanese olive oil varieties. A prerequisite is ensuring the compatibility of these varieties with the developed tool. The collection of samples and their analysis will need to follow the established protocol.

4. Transfer of Know-how

Project partners will support Agro Cedrus to begin the identification of Lebanese native cultivars. Agro Cedrus will mobilise the laboratories of the Tripoli Chamber providing samples and working closely with project experts to assess varietal characteristics. These analyses will ensure scientific reliability and contribute to the project's quality standards. This will help integrate Lebanese biodiversity into the broader Mediterranean framework and will define the organoleptic and nutritional traits of Lebanese olive oils. Prerequisite for this activity is the extra funding.



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