

WES-BCA PRESS RELEASE

The 2026-2027 Work Plan of WES-BCA project was endorsed during its 2nd Steering Committee Meeting

Athens, 15 May 2026

During the online 2nd Steering Committee Meeting (SCM), of the EU-funded project “Water and Environment Support-Biodiversity and Climate Action (WES-BCA) in the Neighbourhood South region”, on the 12th of May 2026, its progress, since the previous SCM (May 2025), was thoroughly reviewed and its Work Plan of 2026-2027, was presented and endorsed.

It is noteworthy that despite the recent turbulent situation in the region, the WES-BCA activities were not seriously affected thanks to careful handling of the challenges.

The project’s team of experts confirmed that the planned national, regional and horizontal activities related to Plastic Pollution, Biodiversity and different aspects of management of Conventional and Non-Conventional Water Resources, harmoniously integrated with the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus, including trainings, study tours, workshops, consultations, webinars, surveys, as well as the outreach and awareness campaigns will be delivered according to the schedule, if the conditions do not get worse.

As in previous years, this SCM brought together the Partner Countries’ (PCs) Focal Points appointed by the related Environment and Water Ministries, the competent DGs of the European Commission (DG MENA, DG ENV), the EU Delegations in the PCs, the institutional partners (Union for the Mediterranean and the Barcelona Convention), key stakeholders and of course, the WES-BCA Team. During their two Tour de Table discussions, they expressed their full satisfaction, strong support for the continuation and enhancement of the WES-BCA project to the extent possible.

At the opening, Mr. Andrea Vera, Head of the Sector for Green Transition and Connectivity, DG MENA European Commission, welcomed the participants and stressed that the work of the WES-BCA fully resonates with and supports the implementation of the **Pact for the Mediterranean**, a very important and ambitious policy initiative/flagship of the EC, launched in November 2025, to further deepen cooperation between the EU and its Southern Mediterranean partners, co-creating a space of peace, prosperity and stability. He emphasized that fundamental elements of the Pact are major areas of the exemplary work of WES-BCA and he invited the project and its PCs to continue and further benefit from new opportunities emerging through the Pact and relevant activities of various DGs.

Mr. Patrick Wegerdt, Directorate-General for Environment (DG-ENV), European Commission, noted that Environmental resilience is a critical issue for the Mediterranean region. Through WES-BCA, the EU is committed to supporting partner countries in advancing concrete solutions on water management, circular economy, marine pollution and climate adaptation, fully aligned with the objectives of the Pact for the Mediterranean and the EU’s broader environmental agenda, including the Water Resilience Strategy.

Dr. Nisreen Tamimi, Deputy Secretary General for Sustainable Development, Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), expressed satisfaction with the close and fruitful cooperation with WES-BCA, highlighting the successful joint support to PCs in preparing their 7th National Reports to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as strong collaboration on waste-related issues, in particular marine litter, and on sustainable consumption and production practices, linking to the ongoing Global Plastics Treaty negotiations. She concluded by recognizing WES-BCA’s significant contribution to the UfM Environment/Green Economy Agenda, so called 2030GreenerMed, and efforts to strengthen Mediterranean coordination.

Dr. Tatjana Hema, Coordinator, UNEP/MAP, highlighted the growing cooperation between UNEP/MAP and the WES-BCA project, describing it as contributing to tackling some of the Mediterranean’s most pressing environmental challenges. She noted that several of the project’s initiatives also closely contribute to UNEP/MAP policy and regulatory frameworks, particularly efforts to curb plastic pollution and marine litter while advancing more integrated and efficient water management across the region. Dr. Hema expressed UNEP/MAP’s appreciation for the work undertaken by the EU funded WES-BCA and for playing an important role in the region in strengthening country capacities in their efforts to deliver an ambitious environmental agenda and UNEP/MAP commitment for joint work and maximized synergies.

Mr. Stavros Damianidis, CEO of LDK Consultants S.A. and WES-BCA Project Director, stated that despite the challenging situation in the region, the excellent WES-BCA team of experts, in tandem with the WES-BCA Focal Points, deliver work that ensures regional integration.

Professor Michael Scoullas, Team Leader, WES-BCA, emphasized the important contributions of the WES-BCA project in different technical, regulatory and monitoring aspects of the critical issue of Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution, including Single Use Plastics (SUPs). Furthermore, he referred to 25 significant WES-BCA activities and interventions for the achievement of the WEFE Nexus Strategy, through a close collaboration with the EU, UfM, UNEP/MAP, GWP-Med and PRIMA. He announced five more upcoming activities for the finalization and pilot applications of the Strategy's Framework for Action. He emphasized that the good results are the outcomes of collective efforts. He also announced WES-BCA's commitment to contribute in all major regional and global events, including for 2026, the Water Ministerial (Rome, September); COP 31 UNFCCC (Antalya, November) and UN Water Conference (Abu Dhabi, December). He expressed his hope that the overall situation in the region will be significantly improved, and he repeated that the WES-BCA project apart from being significant for technical and institutional matters, acts also as a platform for promoting cooperation and peaceful coexistence for the sustainable future of the Mediterranean region.

Commenting on the WEFE Nexus Strategy, UfM praised WES-BCA for contributing significantly for the 3-year participatory process followed for the formulation of the Strategy, with consultations among the six parties mentioned already and many more stakeholders and endorsed by the UfM 43 Member States at the end of 2025. The UfM confirmed the continued close collaboration with WES-BCA and other partners for the next steps, including the completion of the joint Action Framework to translate the Strategy into concrete regional action and investments.

Mr Youssef Tadros, Programme Manager, WES-BCA, DG-MENA, European Commission, in his concluding remarks mentioned that WES-BCA demonstrates the added value of regional cooperation in addressing the Mediterranean's shared environmental and climate challenges. By supporting practical action on water resilience, pollution reduction, climate adaptation and the WEFE Nexus, the project contributes directly to the implementation of the Pact for the Mediterranean and its vision for a more sustainable, resilient and integrated region.

WES-BCA project in a snapshot:

The "Water and Environment Support-Biodiversity and Climate Action (WES-BCA) in the Neighbourhood South region" project is the continuation of the WES project and aims to improve the protection of the environment, the restoration of biodiversity and the management of scarce water resources, while enhancing the resilience to climate change in the Mediterranean region, strengthening the formulation and enforcement of the relevant policies of the Partner Countries and the two regional political frameworks, namely the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Barcelona Convention.

Partner Countries: Eight countries of the Middle East and North Africa

Duration: November 2024-November 2027

Budget: 7.000.000 Euros

Implementing Consortium of leading European and regional entities with complementary skills and experience, namely:

LDK CONSULTANTS S.A. (Leader), Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED), Association of Cities and Regions for Sustainable Resource Management (ACR+), Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (CIHEAM Bari), Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE), MedWaves, the Regional Activity Centre of UNEP/MAP for Sustainable Consumption and Production.

Contracting Authority: European Commission, Directorate-General Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR)

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