



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Approved by the General Assembly of MAW in June 2024

The document outlines the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Mediterranean Alliance for Wetlands (MAW), emphasizing its voluntary network structure, collaborative approach, and strategic objectives, including communication, capacity-building, advocacy, and policy coordination, with a detailed overview of its governance bodies, operational protocols, and resource management.

The ToR was adopted by the members of the Mediterranean Alliance for Wetlands (MAW) in January 2017, and last amended in June 2024.

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1. Context

The Mediterranean is the second largest biodiversity hotspot in the world (more than two million square kilometers). This hotspot is especially important due to the high number of endemic species and its high species richness (one tenth of the plants of the world). Despite this, nearly half of Mediterranean wetlands have been degraded and lost since 1970 and 35% of related freshwater species are threatened with extinction¹. This has largely been driven by sectoral development policy and investments (e.g. agriculture, water, tourism) characterized by the lack of awareness or motivation to prioritize the benefits of healthy wetlands and rivers to the society.

In response to this worrying situation, the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet) was established in 1991, bringing together 27 countries around the Mediterranean basin, several NGOs, supranational organizations and research centers. As the first regional initiative of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of international importance, MedWet has been instrumental in structuring and promoting operational collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for conservation and sustainable management of wetlands, although not being able yet to reverse this negative trend. In 2008, to better influence public policies and development planning decision in favor of wetlands conservation and wise use, the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory (MWO) has been established within MedWet, as a Science/Policy partnership designed to provide decision-makers regularly updated and scientifically validated information on the status of wetlands in the Mediterranean basin, threats affecting them, as well as actions for sustainable management. More recently, MedWet established the Scientific and Technical Network to provide scientific and technical support concerning national policies and actions related to wetlands conservation and sustainable use.

However, over the last decade the Mediterranean basin went through turmoils, leading to a lasting political and institutional instability, a weakening of a number of governmental institutions and a decline of environmental concern in political agendas. At the same time, civil society has experienced a strong development in various countries, with in many cases a great need for capacity-building in technical, communication and organizational fields to build their professionalism, a prerequisite to become credible and recognized by public institutions.

¹ <https://www.iucnredlist.org/search?query=Mediterranean&searchType=species>

In this context, in January 2017, following a meeting gathering a number of Mediterranean NGOs and research organisations, together with donors and the MedWet Secretariat, it has been decided to establish the “**Mediterranean Alliance for Wetlands**” to mobilize civil society towards the sustainable use of Mediterranean wetlands.

This Alliance intends to contribute to the effective conservation of Mediterranean wetlands and the wise use of their resources, values and services. We firmly believe that through collaboration we can achieve more and go beyond the capacity of any individual organisation. Therefore, we work in close collaboration with MedWet, MWO and the MedWet Scientific and Technical Network. In order to ensure optimal flow of information and synergies, the MedWet Secretariat is a permanent observer and is invited to all meetings of the Members Assembly and of the Steering Committee.

2. Introduction

As a voluntary network, the MAW depends on its members to set ambitious but achievable contributions to the goals of the MAW.

The **Terms of Reference (ToR)** described in this document aims to outline both the vision and how members can contribute to that vision.

The **Chart of Collaboration** was first adopted in January 2017 and last amended in June 2024. The Chart of Collaboration is the main reference for the members of the Alliance, providing a framework with fundamental principles for members participation. [Available here](#).

The Alliance has other supporting documents, such as:

The Actionable Strategy adopted in January 2023. It provides the guiding principles and a plan of action to ensure the good functioning of the Mediterranean Alliance for Wetlands during the next 3 years.

Financial Sustainability Plan, last updated in August 2024, sets the strategic framework and priorities for fundraising.

Communication Strategy, last updated in August 2024, guides the Alliance in living the identity and brand in order to become coherent and recognisable by our main audiences. Under the strategy there is the Housestyle and branding book that outlines our image.

Red Alert Protocol, last updated in 2020, guides the application to the launch of a Red Alert process. Includes the application form.

Green Lights Protocol, last updated in November 2023, this protocol explains how the Green Light works, it includes an application form for a yearly call for restoration plans with focus on North African countries.

3. MAW Objectives

Vision:

Healthy Mediterranean wetlands supporting thriving communities and rich nature.

Mission:

To increase the capacity of Mediterranean societies to ensure the protection, restoration and sustainable use of wetlands and rivers.

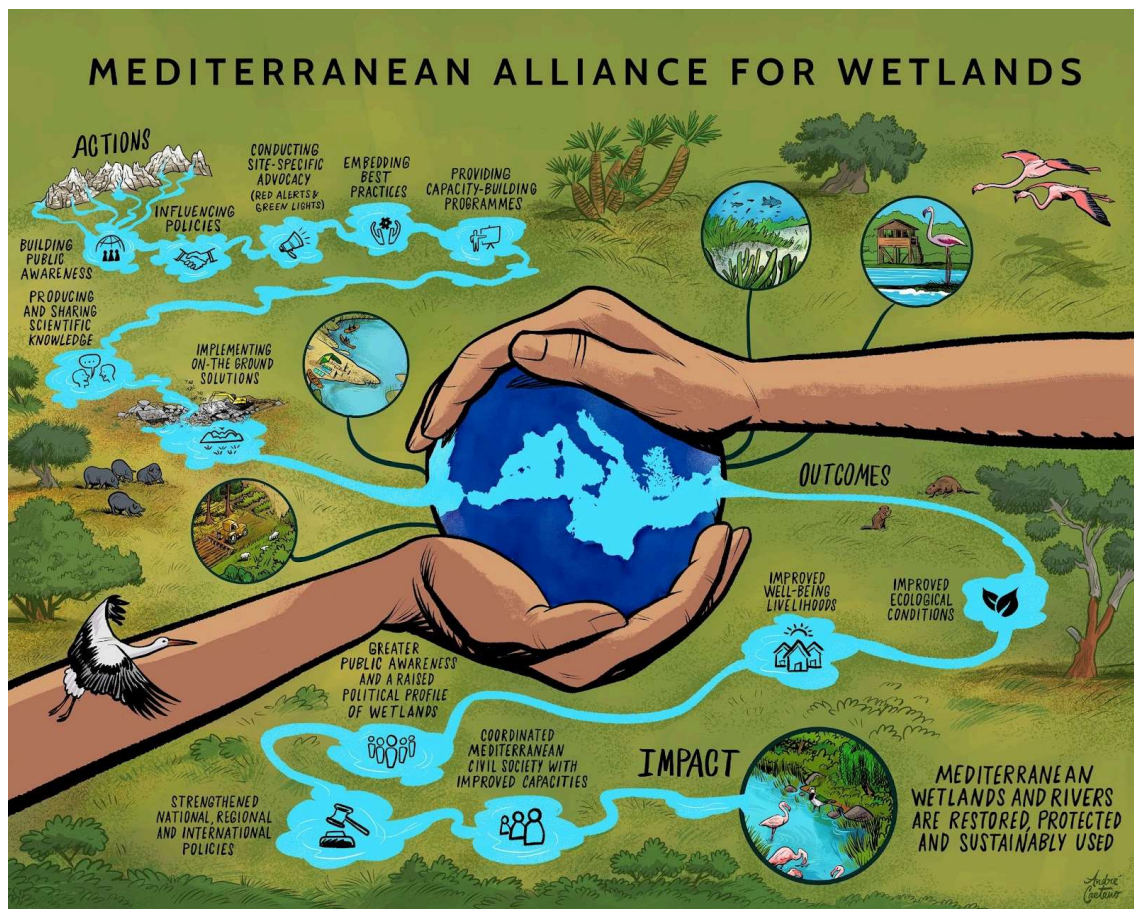


Fig. 2 - Illustration of the MAW Theory of Change

Objectives:

To achieve its mission and ensure its overall impact and effectiveness, the Alliance aims to:

- **Exchange and share** in a multidirectional manner between the members of the Alliance available knowledge, sources, experiences, best practices, information on model sites, etc...
- **Build the capacity** of the CSOs so that they can become more effective in actions related to wetland management and conservation.
- **Effectively link** local, national, regional and international actors or initiatives through innovative concrete joint actions on prioritized policy and strategic topics.
- **Increase the public profile of wetlands** through joint communication using scientific knowledge and concerted messages around the value of wetlands, their multiple advantages and benefits they provide to people and the potential solutions they hold in the face of global change, including climate change.

4. Members Participation

Members of the Alliance can be sub-national, national and international NGOs, CSOs and research organizations of various sizes and abilities, but having in common a commitment to conservation and sustainable use of Mediterranean wetlands.

The Alliance is meant to be inclusive, i.e. open to any organization that is willing to actively contribute to and benefit from one or more of its core functions. Each member commits to comply with these ToRs and to sign the “Chart of Collaboration” specifying the general governance of the Alliance, recalling the mission and the main functions to which each member is expected to contribute.

Organizations that cannot be members - i.e. governmental or intergovernmental organizations other than research organizations, donors, networks of NGOs - or that are not ready for full commitment to the Alliance, but that are willing to collaborate with the Alliance on one or more of its core functions, can be fully associated to the work of the Alliance as partners. However, they can't be part of the governance bodies, nor take positions on behalf of the Alliance.

5. Structure and Organisation

The Alliance is an informal mechanism, without legal existence, meant to be as light, flexible and inclusive as possible.

It is meant to be adaptive and responsive to serve the mission and the functions of the Alliance and seize opportunities. The priority of this mechanism is to create and maintain a good flow of communication, to build trust among members and to deliver key messages in a concerted way. The cooperation between the Alliance members aims to be project-oriented. This means that the different working units seek to support the development of different projects and set their agenda and frequency of meetings according to project opportunities.

The Alliance will amplify members actions, and their impact across the Mediterranean by working through the following pillars:

- **Alliance development:** Consolidating and strengthening further the Alliance's governance with both strategic and management capacities to leverage fundraising efforts and ensure sustainable operation.
- **Capacity-building:** Improving the technical knowledge of CSOs and practitioners, access to scientific information from the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory empowering them to take sustained and impactful action.
- **Embedding solutions:** Developing innovative solutions to mobilise ecosystem restoration (especially at the landscape scale), reducing water abstraction, fostering connectivity, while also promoting alternatives to destructive development practices.
- **Policy and advocacy:** Supporting the implementation and enforcement of Mediterranean policies to step up action for solutions to the most urgent challenges for wetlands and rivers.
- **Communications:** Supporting member's communication and outreach strategies, including the organisation of events and campaigns.

For these activities to develop successfully, **MAW secretariat** proposes a series of transversal projects that can benefit many members. For example:

1. Strengthening civil society's role in wetlands and rivers conservation (structural costs);
2. Red Alerts and Green Lights to safeguard Mediterranean wetlands and to catalyze wetland restoration;
3. Training Civil Society to Scale Up Wetland Conservation in the Mediterranean (capacity building and embedding solutions);
4. Wetlands4MedResilience (develop on the ground activities).

The MAW secretariat can possibly provide funding support through workshops, capacity-building, small grants, relationship-building with donors, but not engage to provide funding to members. The coordinating members will strive to identify opportunities for collaboration and joint fundraising, however, the Alliance is not a grant-making facility.

From 2023 to 2025, the Secretariat will be co-led by Tour du Valat and Wetlands International Europe with the advisory role of IUCN Mediterranean Center for Cooperation (IUCN-Med). Within this mandate, there are four pillars of core collaboration that are considered activities under the Alliance and facilitated by the Coordinating Members of the Secretariat and collaboration among all the members of the Alliance.

The governance bodies are the following:

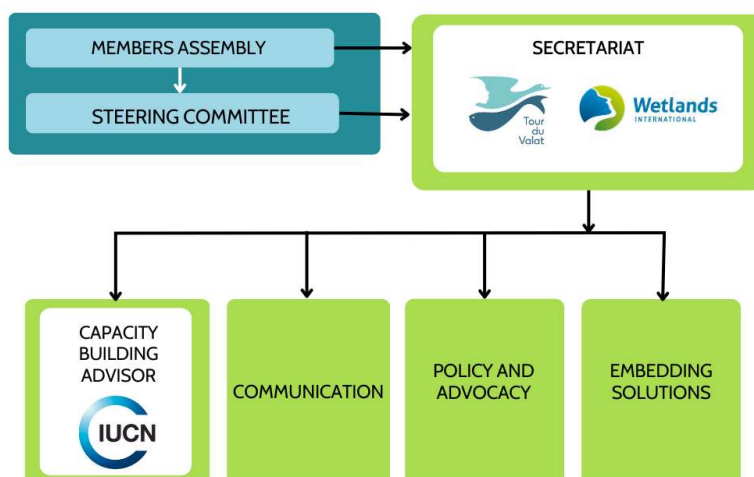


Fig. 2 - MAW Governance bodies

5.1 Members Assembly - Strategy

Composition and operation:

NGOs and research institutes are members of the network. The MAW Members' Assembly guides the Alliance's strategy and action plan and is represented by a Steering Committee (SC) of members. The General Assembly is the decision-making body and meets physically

once a year. MAW members are described in Annex I. They contribute to the activities of the Alliance.

Main functions:

- Adoption of the Strategic Plan and the Annual Action Plan
- Assessment of the implementation of the Annual Action Plan
- Adoption of the “Chart of collaboration”

5.2 Steering Committee - Strategy and Coordination

Composition and operation:

The MAW Members' Assembly guides the Alliance's strategy and action plan and is represented by a Steering Committee (SC) of members.

The overall purpose of the SC is to provide input, review, decisions and monitor progress of the yearly action plan, provide strategic and policy guidance and support dissemination of the Alliance work and achievements. The SC plays a pivotal role in supporting conflict resolution by providing a structured framework for addressing disputes, fostering open communication, and ensuring that all parties' concerns are fairly considered to reach a consensus.

Medwet is a permanent observer and will be invited to all SC meetings to articulate our work. IUCN Med has an advisor role on communications and leads the Capacity building programme.

The Steering Committee agrees on the frequency of meetings from the beginning of their mandate.

Terms of Reference - See Annex II

5.3 Coordination Unit

5.3.1 Secretariat

Composition

Organization willing to take this role and approved by the general assembly, constituted of at least one person.

Main functions:

- Represent the Alliance
- Coordinate functioning of the annual action plan and the Alliance pillars
- Facilitates and organizes the meetings
- Facilitate interactions between members
- Monitor and support coordination between pillars
- Identify and establish synergies and collaboration with external stakeholders
- Share training and funding opportunities, new trends, etc.
- Engage with donors
- Investigates the needs of the members and proposes ways to support them

[The Actionable strategy 2023-2025](#) outlines the division of responsibilities among the coordinators of the Secretariat.

5.3.2 Communication

Composition:

The Communication Officers of the Alliance members willing to take part in it, constituted of at least three members, and one of them acting as leader officer should be closely associated, as appropriate.

Criteria:

- Expertise in communication (national, international level and key targeted audiences to be identified in the strategy)
- Geographical representativeness.
- Gender representativeness
- Balance between international, national and local members.

Main functions:

- Develop and implement a communication strategy and the annual Work Plan with an agenda including key events for advocating Alliance's positions.
- Activate and mobilize the communication networks of each member.
- Identify key media to be targeted, as well as key « spokespersons » or wetlands ambassadors.

5.3.3 Capacity-building

Composition:

Secretariat members in charge of the capacity building programs.

Criteria:

- Expertise in organizational activities, coordination and group animation. Skills and experience in drafting training materials, guidelines, etc.
- Geographical representativeness.
- Gender representativeness
- Balance between international, national and local members.

Main functions:

- Creation and developing constituents, such as learning tools, resources, methods and approaches, to increase the capacity at local, national and regional level that will ultimately lead to a better understanding and management of wetlands.
- Coordination of training courses to improve the skills of civil society in the suite of actions linked to wetlands, particularly the protection, restoration, management, monitoring, and communication concerning wetlands
- Coordination of micro projects to contribute to the conservation and sustainable management of Mediterranean wetlands, while strengthening through learning the capacities of emerging civil society organizations to act at certain sites

5.3.4 Advocacy and Policy

Composition:

Constituted of at least three members, and one of them acting as leader.

Criteria:

- Expertise in advocacy actions and campaigns, legal framework and regulations, lobbying.
- Geographical representativeness.
- Gender representativeness
- Balance between international, national and local members.

Main functions:

- Coordination of the Red Alert, Green Lights, input to international agreements, etc.

In order to optimize synergies and exchange of information between MedWet and the Alliance, the MedWet Secretariat is a permanent observer. In this respect, it is invited to all meetings of the Alliance governance bodies.

6. RESOURCES

The operating costs of the governance bodies will be covered by each of the organizations participating in the governance structure. The associations can apply to financial opportunities and allocate/justify the investment to their work within the network.

Members can apply together in common projects, based on common ideas. This could help in fundraising for the needed expenses. An equitable distribution of tasks and resources should be sought. Any company/legal entity interested in supporting the Alliance will be checked by the SC that they do not have any adverse impacts on the environment in any way.

ANNEX 1

MAW Members and Partners

Founding members

The Alliance has been established in January 2017 with 20 members (14 international or national NGOs and 6 research organizations), from 12 countries.

International NGOs

- Euronatur
- MedINA
- Wetlands International
- WWF North Africa

Other international associations

- IUCN Center for Mediterranean Cooperation (IUCN-Med)
- Global Water Partnership Mediterranean (GWP-Med)

National NGOs

- Les Amis des Oiseaux (AAO/BirdLife Tunisia)
- Doğa Derneği (DD) / Turkey
- Groupe de Recherche pour la Protection des Oiseaux au Maroc (GREPOM) / Morocco
- Petites Îles de Méditerranée (PIM) / France
- Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) / Jordan
- Society for the Protection of Prespa (SPP) / Greece
- Society for the Protection of Nature of Lebanon (SPNL) / Lebanon
- WWF Greece

Scientific organizations

- Centre d'Ecologie Fonctionnelle et Evolutive (CEFE-CNRS) / France
- Institut Méditerranéen de Biodiversité et d'Ecologie (IMBE) / France
- Ornithological Research Center / Ondokuz Mayıs University / Turkey

- Society of Wetlands Scientists
- Tour du Valat, Research Institute for the Conservation of Mediterranean Wetlands / France
- University of Annaba / Algeria

New members

Further to an expression of interest from several organizations, the Alliance Steering Committee submitted applications of several NGOs to the Members Assembly, who endorsed them:

- Institute for Nature Conservation in Albania (INCA) / Albania (2017)
- Association Nationale Algérienne d'Ornithologie (ANAO) / Algeria (2017)
- Centar Za Zastiitu Ptica (CZIP) / Montenegro (2017)
- SPANA / Morocco (2017)
- WWF Spain (2021)
- MEDSEA Foundation (2021)
- Geota / Portugal (2021)
- Birdlife International (2021)

Partners

The following organizations have expressed the willingness to cooperate with the Alliance:

- Agence Française de Développement / France
- Conservatoire du Littoral / France
- Estación Biologica de Doñana – CSIC / Spain
- MAVA Foundation (prior 2023)
- UNEP-MAP Plan Bleu
- UNEP-MAP CAR/ASP

New Partners

- PAP-RAC
- Vertigo Lab

Observers

- MedWet Secretariat

ANNEX 2

Terms of Reference - Steering Committee

Updated 21st August 2023

This ToR establishes the purpose and responsibilities of the Mediterranean Alliance for Wetlands Steering Committee.

The Mediterranean Alliance for Wetlands (MAW) is a network of civil society and research organisations, which began its operations in 2017 with the aim to increase the capacity of the Mediterranean society to ensure the protection, restoration and sustainable use of wetlands and rivers.

1. Purpose

The MAW Members' Assembly guides the Alliance's strategy and action plan and is represented by a Steering Committee (SC) of members.

The overall purpose of the SC is to provide input, review, decisions and monitor progress of the yearly action plan, provide strategic and policy guidance and support dissemination of the Alliance work and achievements.

2. The role and responsibilities of the SC are as follows:

- Support the development of the strategy for validation by the Members' Assembly;
- Oversee the coordination of the implementation and monitoring of the strategy and the annual action plan;
- Ensures the representation of the Alliance members geographically, but also between national and international organizations and gender-based;
- Provide strategic direction, expert advice, guidance and recommendations to the secretariat;
- Approve Red Alert applications;
- Actively participate in meetings through attendance, discussion, and review of minutes and other relevant documents;
- Assists with the development of links between members and relevant networks, initiatives and partnerships at local, national and regional scale;
- Share with the Secretariat any relevant information (eg. policy updates, or projects/programme development, data) that might be of interest for the Alliance and its members;

3. Composition

The Steering Committee may be expanded depending on the needs of the network and the ability of Committee members to engage. MedWet is a permanent observer and will be invited to all meetings to articulate our work, other MAW partners or experts can be invited occasionally.

The Steering Committee agrees on the frequency of meetings from the beginning of their mandate.

Criteria

- Geographic representativeness.
- Gender representativeness.
- Policy expertise in the different national, international levels.
- Balance between international, national and local members.

Exceptionally, a member institution may change its representative to the meetings, but they should commit to inform the secretariat and the official representative on decisions taken by the SC. However, to ensure continuity in representation and to preserve the memory and lessons learned, changes in the representative should not be frequent.

The SC membership is intended to be rotational, SC members should stay a maximum of 4 years. The SC members should not be renewed all at the same time in order to preserve the memory and keep the advisory role a stable mechanism.

If a member no longer wishes to be part of the SC, it can resign at any time. However, the member needs to inform the SC and Secretariat via e-mail, so a replacement position should be evaluated in a timely manner.

The SC may ask a member to resign if the member consistently fails to fulfill the responsibilities described in Section 2, including frequent absences from meetings without coverage by an alternate.

If the SC members are at least 8 and the criteria stated above are followed, it will be not mandatory to open a SC member position.

The table below lists the members of the SC. The SC mandate goes from February 2023 to December 2025. This table will be updated and kept current as members are added, removed, or resign from their duties under the SC of MAW.

Organisation	Country	Status	Representative
AAO/BirdLife in Tunisia - Association "L'Amis des Oiseaux"	Tunisia	Member	Hichem Azafzaf/Claudia Feltrup-Azafzaf
ANAO - L'Association Nationale Algérienne d'Ornithologie	Algeria	Member	Imène Benzina
AOS - Albanian Ornithological Soc.	Albania	Member	Taulant Bino / Besjana Shehu
DOGA - BirdLife Turkey	Turkey	Member	Serdar Ozulslu
GEOTA	Portugal	Member	Helder Careto
GREPOM/BirdLife Maroc	Morocco	Member	Asmaâ Ouassou
IUCN - Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation	Spain	Advisor	Catherine Numa
MedWet	France	Observer	Marianne Courouble
Ornithological Research Center	Turkey	Member	Kiraz Erciyas Yavuz
SPNL - Société de Protection de la Nature du Liban/BirdLife	Lebanon	Member	Bassima Khatib
Tour du Valat	France	Member	Thomas Galewski
Wetlands International Europe	Belgium/NL	Member	Chris Baker

4. Meetings and procedures

The current Steering Committee is meeting remotely 4 times a year and the duration is 90min. The Steering Committee can also be invited to extraordinary meetings if needed.

The Secretariat will support the SC in setting the meeting, by identifying the agenda items, taking minutes and action points and sharing the notes with the minutes with the whole network. The meetings will be held at times that are convenient for the largest possible number of members, while still observing good representativeness. It is the responsibility of members to ensure their regular participation at meetings and, when not available, to arrange for participation of a designated alternate.

ANNEX 3

Secretariat Team Members

The following table lists the secretariat team members and the role.

Organisation	Team member
IUCN-Med	Communications - Talia Riche
Tour du Valat	Co-coordinator - Lorena Segura
	Red Alert Policy Officer - Elisa Tuillon
	Capacity building advisor - Christian Perennou
Wetlands International Europe	Co-coordinator - Teresa Zuna
	Freshwater Policy Officer - Irene Duque