

A JOINT CHARTER OF COMMITMENTS FOR MEDITERRANEAN BEACHES WITH POSIDONIA



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**Document prepared by:
IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation**

This Joint Charter of Commitments has been developed in collaboration with the **Autonomous Region of Sardinia** Department of the Environment - Nature Conservation and Forestry Policies Office (Italy), **Natura-Jadera** Public Institution for Management of Protected Areas in the County of Zadar (Croatia), **Région Sud Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur** (France), the **Region of Central Macedonia** (Greece), the **Regional Ministry of the Environment of the Balearic Islands** (Spain), the **International Union of Conservation of Nature** (IUCN), the Institute for the Study of Anthropogenic Impact and Sustainability in the Marine Environment of the **National Research Council** (Italy), the **Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature** (Greece) and **Enalia Physis** Environmental Research Centre (Cyprus), as part of the Interreg-MED EU-funded project POSBEMED2 (2019-2022).

**A JOINT CHARTER OF COMMITMENTS FOR
MEDITERRANEAN BEACHES
WITH POSIDONIA**

THE JOINT CHARTER

THE JOINT CHARTER OF COMMITMENTS IS AN OVERARCHING TRANSFORMATIONAL STRATEGY THAT ARTICULATES THE NATURAL CHARACTER OF MEDITERRANEAN BEACHES AND THE ACTION COMMITMENTS TO BE UNDERTAKEN TO ACHIEVE ITS LONG-TERM CONSERVATION.

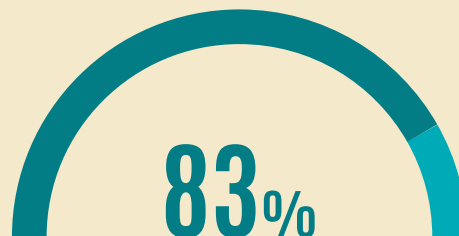
The Mediterranean coastline is a special and unique natural asset that supports much of the region's economy and community wellbeing. The beaches along the Mediterranean range from urban or semi-urban environments, glitzy and glamorous to perfectly secluded hamlets. Almost every country that has a Mediterranean coastline has sandy beaches and the unique seagrass *Posidonia oceanica* in its nearshore waters.

Today, the region is the world's leading tourism destination in terms of both international and domestic tourism and beach tourism is a key economic driver for coastal regions. The environmental pressures from human-induced activities along these coastal areas are taking a

toll on the conservation of its natural landscape, its biodiversity and the tourism industry itself as they reduce the attractiveness of coastal destinations. Moreover, the region is particularly vulnerable to the effects of global climate change, with coastal areas in particular facing heightened challenges such as severe erosion, storm events, higher sea and air temperatures and flooding.

Much of the Mediterranean coastline is now a highly managed one. Common practices on many beaches include actions such as the removal of *Posidonia* banquettes, formed largely from the leaves of seagrasses washed ashore, sand and organic matter. The seagrass and the consequent banquettes occasionally formed on Mediterranean shorelines are increasingly recognised for their ability to play a catalytic role in climate change adaptation and as key biodiversity reservoirs. The vast underwater meadows formed by *Posidonia* plants contribute to improved water quality, increased marine biodiversity and the reduction of wave energy particularly during heavy storms. The banquettes can protect the coast from erosion and sand loss and support the overall stability of nearby dune systems. *Posidonia* constitutes a valuable Mediterranean natural asset that plays a fundamental role in protecting the coastal environment.

Future management needs to be responsive to changing conditions on these dynamic environments, manage erosion risks, biodiversity loss and tourism growth to achieve positive net impact. This needs creative solutions such as using nature-based solutions with *Posidonia* and increasing efforts on knowledge, communication, coordination and the development of good policies and practices.



83% of surveyed local authorities remove seagrass deposits and banquettes every year on some or all beaches, including in protected areas (POSBEMED project, 2018).

Tourism

represents

92%

of the economy of sea-related activities in the Mediterranean

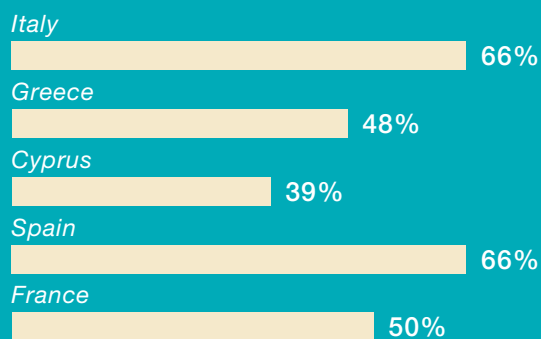
Benefits

derived from ecosystem services coming from tourism and value derived from nature is estimated at

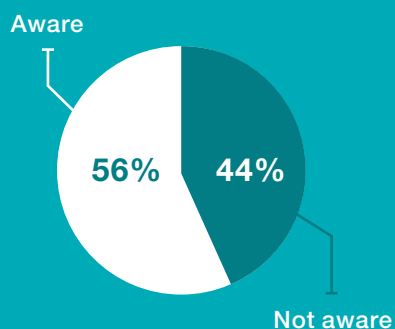
17 €BILLION/YEAR



Public awareness of the ecological role of banquettes:



Overall public awareness in surveyed countries (2018).



Posidonia banquettes and fibrous balls formed from leaves and rhizomes of Posidonia seagrass made by the action of waves breaking on the beach.



WHY A JOINT CHARTER OF COMMITMENTS?

The **Joint Charter of Commitments for Mediterranean beaches with Posidonia** aims to create a stable collaboration between country governments at any administrative level and concerned local stakeholders across the Mediterranean to promote sustainable and nature-based management practices for natural beaches with *Posidonia oceanica*. It contributes to the creation of an engaged Mediterranean-wide stakeholder network and aims to raise awareness on the importance of protecting these valuable marine and coastal ecosystems.

Signing the Charter of Commitments means forming part of an extensive network of regional governments, municipalities and stakeholders across the Mediterranean who commit to implementing actions in favour of the protection and conservation of natural beaches with Posidonia. It signals an authentic interest to participate in local development and create valuable synergies to conserve a uniquely Mediterranean natural asset and preserve it for future generations. Signatories of the Charter are ambassadors of these shared principles and signal a commitment to creating and implementing a plan of action for long-term conservation.

The Charter is a comprehensive approach that seeks to:

- 1 **Recognise Mediterranean beaches for their unique, natural and authentic character.**
- 2 **Manage Mediterranean beaches with respect** and paying particular attention to the fauna and flora that inhabit them.
- 3 **Enhance the cultural identity of Mediterranean beaches.**
- 4 Develop seaside economies in a manner that takes into account the **benefits** of *Posidonia oceanica* in **sustaining the quality of the coast.**
- 5 **Promote healthy beaches** that reflect the **good quality of bathing waters** and marine ecosystems.
- 6 Promote biodiversity and the **preservation of these beaches for future generations.**
- 7 **Preserve the beauty and uniqueness** of Mediterranean coastal landscapes.
- 8 **Provide clean, waste-free beaches that are accessible to all.**
- 9 Conserve the ecological features of beaches to increase the **resilience of Mediterranean coasts to climate change.**

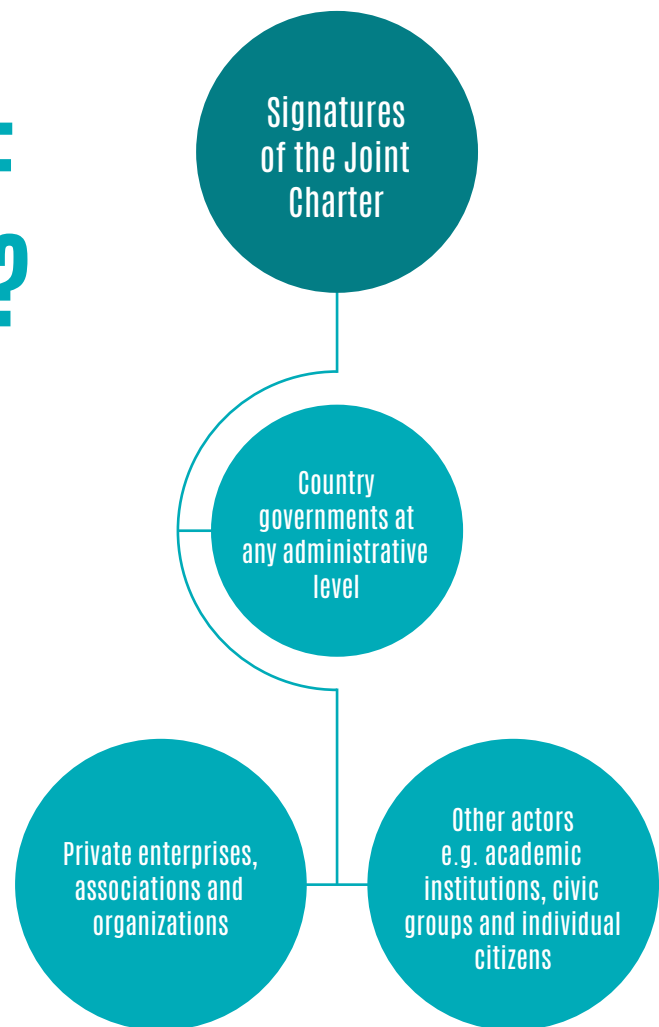


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WHO CAN SIGN THE CHARTER OF COMMITMENTS?

The **Joint Charter of Commitments for Mediterranean beaches with Posidonia** seeks to gain the support of Mediterranean multi-level country governments, municipalities, stakeholders and civic actors across sectors. It aims to create a stable network of local, regional and national administrations that promotes the creation of meaningful collaborations with concerned local stakeholders and communities.

However, it is important to note that the Charter is open to signature by all organisations, institutions and stakeholders and encourages participation within each actor's capacities and resources.



MISSION OF THE CHARTER



1

Promote the commitment to this Charter among stakeholders

2

Participate in the development of knowledge concerning the ecosystem of the beach and the banquette and more generally of Mediterranean coastal ecosystems;

3

Raise awareness, inform, educate or enhance the capacity building of beach stakeholders, in order to better understand and protect the banquettes and Mediterranean coastal systems;

4

Change collective and individual behaviours and practices with regards to the presence of the Posidonia banquettes on the beaches, so as to act in a manner that benefits their conservation;

5

Promote and disseminate best management practices for beaches that respect their naturalness and encourage the sharing of experiences;

6

Participate to mainstream nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches in Mediterranean coastal management;

7

Comply with existing regional, national and European regulations concerning Posidonia meadows and banquettes or promote the application of a regulation in countries or regions where it does not exist

8

Share learnings and support those who are starting out on this process.

The Joint Charter contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals, the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, and aligns with the objectives of UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) to support efforts for adaptation strategies and science-informed policy responses to global change, reverse the cycle of decline in ocean health and support the implementation of the Agenda 2030.



2021
2030 United Nations Decade
of Ocean Science
for Sustainable Development

OUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO SDG

13 CLIMATE ACTION



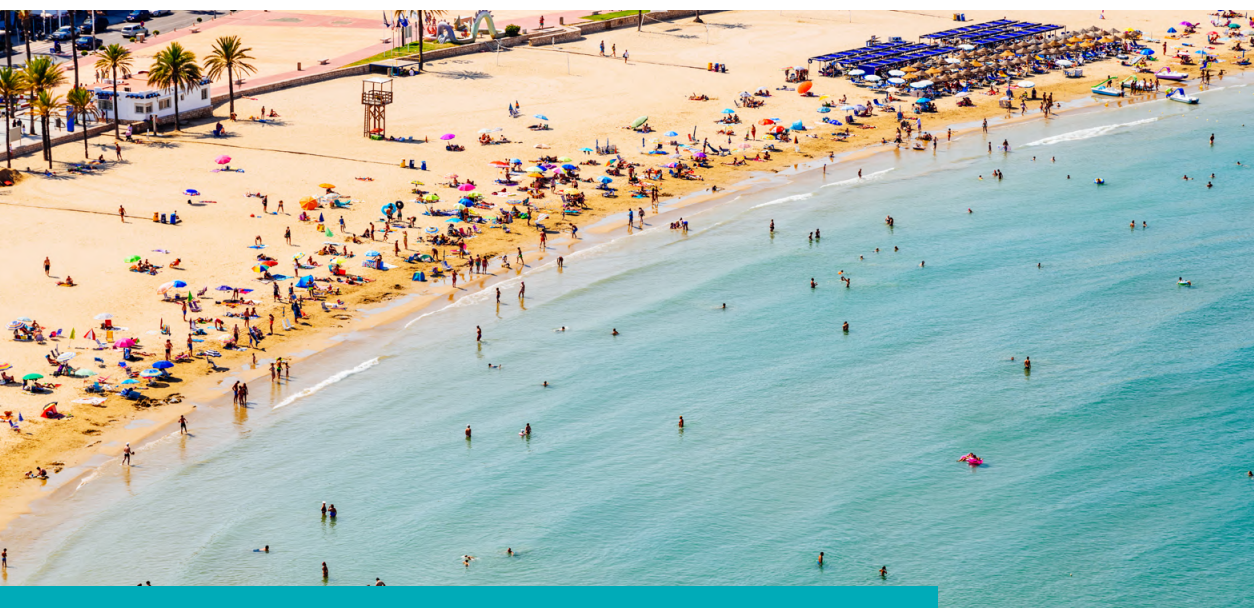
Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards; integrate climate change measures into policies, strategies and planning; and improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

14 LIFE BELOW WATER



Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Protect and restore marine and coastal ecosystems; increase scientific knowledge for Ocean Health; conserve coastal and marine areas.

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF THE COMMITMENTS?



The value of the commitments is based on their capability to address local issues related to the management of Posidonia banquettes and Posidonia coastal ecosystems in the Mediterranean. Commitments should be meaningful in nature, preferably based on technical and scientific data as well as management measures that have been proven to be sustainable and effective. Weak or vague commitments run the risk of discrediting the collective approach of the Charter and wasting the actor's resources with little return for the efforts made.

Each commitment should be realistic and achievable in relation to the abilities and capabilities of the actor who is making it, and implemented within a defined timeframe.

The Charter aims to propose a series of commitments based on the common values and objectives previously described and are tailored to meet the interests, priorities and means of actions of different groups of actors, including administrations and beach managers, economic actors, associations and foundations and educational actors, among others.



Enabling actions

Research
Monitoring
Providing financial support
Leadership
Participatory governance
Increased awareness and advocacy

Policy actions

Laws and Regulations
Incentives
Policy guidelines and Strategies

Impacting actions

Ecosystem conservation
Posidonia banquette conservation

Progressing to recognise and conserve the natural character of Mediterranean beaches and the action commitments to be undertaken to achieve its long term conservation.

HOW CAN COUNTRY GOVERNMENTS AT ANY ADMINISTRATIVE LEVEL COMMIT TO THE CHARTER?



Country governments, whether they are local, regional or national, can commit to the Charter through actions that define final intended impacts as well as those that work to establish necessary preconditions (enabling environment and policy actions).

Stakeholders can commit to establishing an enabling environment for Mediterranean Posidonia beaches through direct and indirect measures such as increasing research on beach dynamics, Posidonia meadows and banquettes at their sites. Commitments can also include interventions or programmes designed to directly and indirectly improve local **participation** and consultation, mass media and public awareness campaigns, **financing** long-term **monitoring** programmes to oversee nature-based restoration and conservation activities in beaches, and actions that fall under **leadership** and **governance**.

These enabling actions are necessary conditions for **promoting effective policies and regulations** that can include strategies, policies, interventions or incentive programmes that aim to improve *Posidonia oceanica* and Posidonia banquette conservation both directly and indirectly. This can include regulations for addressing a concerted and pro-conservation management of Posidonia banquettes in the areas, managing boat anchoring and trawling impacts or water quality, policy actions that are relevant to develop guidelines and protocols for beach management

with Posidonia banquettes or actions using Nature-based Solutions with Posidonia banquettes for restoring the coastal dune/beach or its marine environment. Given that tourist behaviour is largely shaped by the **existing destination marketing** and **tourism policies**, relevant policies, programmes or incentives that work to influence and conserve the natural character of Mediterranean beaches with Posidonia are particularly relevant when addressing commitments orientated towards tourism.

The final intended impacting actions include commitments designed to directly **improve the natural conservation of the Posidonia dune/beach environment**. This can include operational commitments to not remove banquettes from all beaches, particularly in sensitive areas under erosion processes, key biodiversity areas and protected areas, including Natura 2000 sites. Furthermore, impact actions can include commitments towards increasing the surface area of designated protected areas with Posidonia considering the marine and coastal integration of both components in their management.



In the case of administrations and other entities responsible for beach management, the Charter proposes the following specific commitment focal areas, in addition to which signatories are invited to propose and develop additional, actor-specific commitments as indicated before:



Beaches with *Posidonia* help protect from coastal erosion, retain sand and enhance biodiversity.

- 1 Provide the resources to finance and/or use management techniques** that promote the sustainable management and preservation of *Posidonia* banquettes and Mediterranean coastal ecosystems overall.
- 2 Avoid the use of heavy machinery,** especially in sensitive areas.
- 3** Where *Posidonia* banquette removal is authorised, **use only soft methods** (manual collection, sifting) that allow the removal of waste only while preserving *Posidonia* banquettes.
- 4** Before deciding on which management technique to implement, **develop a baseline study** to discover and understand **management methods that promote the preservation of *Posidonia* banquettes and coastal ecosystems** (e.g. leaving *Posidonia* banquettes untouched; temporarily removing banquettes during summer season, storing them on-site and returning to the shoreline after the tourist season).
- 5 Develop and implement awareness raising and educational activities** on *Posidonia oceanica* banquettes and meadows addressed to all beach users.
- 6 Promote and/or finance research activities to improve existing knowledge** on the relationships between *Posidonia oceanica* and coastal ecosystems.
- 7 Include in calls for tenders for beach concessions** a specific clause promoting the sustainable management of *Posidonia* banquettes.
- 8 Other actions that target the common objectives and support the enabling actions for *Posidonia* banquette management** (e.g. the support and promotion of local legislation that drives the protection of *Posidonia* banquettes)

The image is a vertical composition split horizontally. The top half shows a coastal landscape under a clear blue sky. On the left, a white, two-story building with a tiled roof sits on a hillside. Below it, a steep, rocky cliff face meets the sea. The water is a deep blue with gentle ripples. The bottom half of the image is an underwater view, showing a dense, vibrant green meadow of Posidonia seagrass growing on a sandy seabed. The water is clear and turquoise, with sunlight filtering through the surface.

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ADMINISTRATIONS AND BEACH MANAGERS

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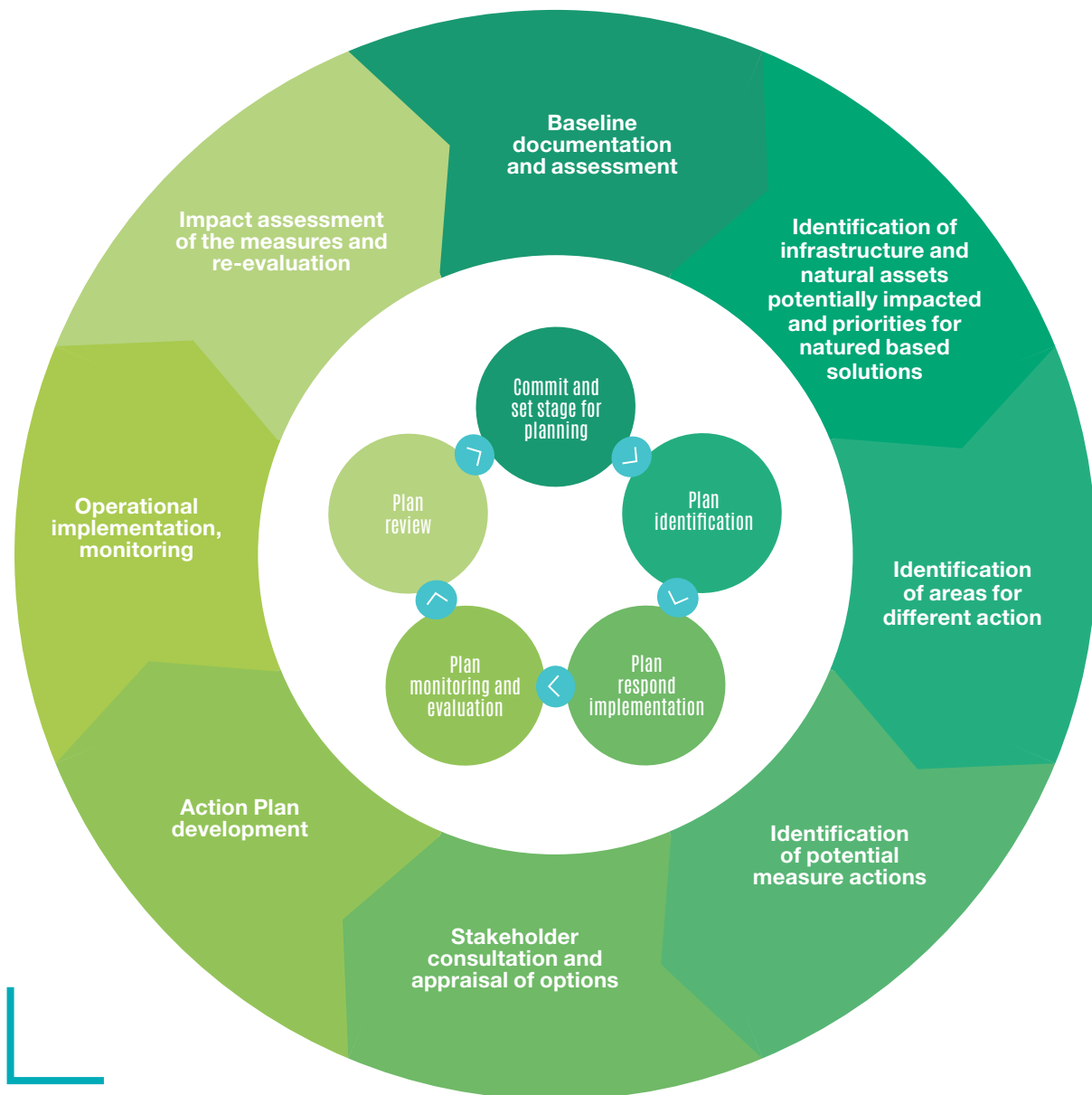
ADMINISTRATIONS AND BEACH MANAGERS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL HAVE A CENTRAL ROLE IN MANAGING THE COAST

Whereas regional or country policies may establish broad shoreline and management plans or establish uses of domain, local councils and municipalities or protected area managers (for those particular situations) establish the specific regulations for marking the use of coastal areas, zoning of activities and maintaining services for beach users.

Developing an action plan sets the framework to investigate present conditions and future actions that will contribute to maintaining Mediterranean Posidonia beaches. Commitments towards the formalisation of action plans under a framework can facilitate decision-making.



Action Plan Framework developed for Posidonia beach sites drawn from the experience built at different Mediterranean regions. (IUCN, 2022).



SMART ACTION COMMITMENTS TO ADDRESS THESE OBJECTIVES

Each commitment or set of commitments that the signatory chooses to adhere to through their participation in the Charter is put into practice through the definition of **SMART goals**. By following a set of clearly defined criteria, signatories are able to establish realistic targets with meaningful and achievable outcomes.

SMART goals aim to provide a framework for developing specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound targets and increase the likelihood of their successful achievement as well as the efficient use of available resources.



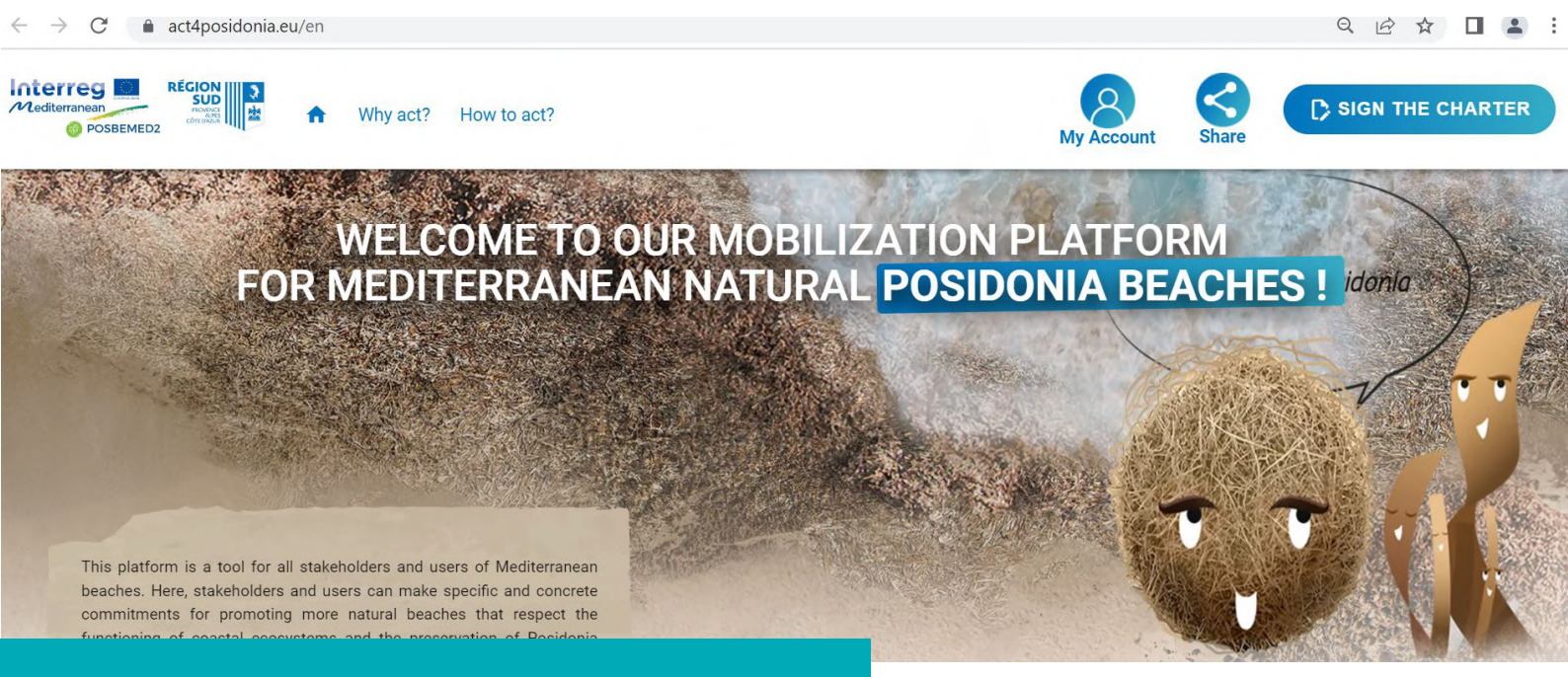
Example of how a commitment can be formulated to follow the SMART criteria:

*“My municipality commits to running an **awareness-raising programme for local residents and beach goers promoting the value of Posidonia beaches and to reduce banquette removal in all protected areas as well as in those with erosion.** The programme will run **from 2022 to 2025.** We will monitor the development of this commitment through **four annual reports (one per year) on the results achieved including the percentage of visitors participating in the programme, evolution of perspectives regarding Posidonia banquettes as well as potential adjustments that need to be made throughout the development of the programme in order to achieve the desired final results**”.*

SMART

	Each commitment should	Elements to include in the commitment
S Specific	Identify a specific goal or multiple goals where the actors, the place and the action are identified.	• The stakeholder responsible for achieving the commitment and reporting on its progress. If it is a joint commitment, the names of each stakeholder should be specified. • The type (enabling, policy, implementing) and description of each goal. • An Action Plan that describes how the goal will be reached. • The geographical location where the action will be implemented. • The target audience of each goal.
M Measurable	Be measurable, with a baseline identified and clearly stating the indicators used to track its progress.	• Baseline status of the action. • Start and end date of the action. • Indicators for measuring the action. • Mechanism for reporting and evaluating how and to what degree the goal has been reached.
A Achievable	Be consistent with progress achieved in the past, ensuring there are sufficient financial and human resources to successfully reach the goal.	• Estimated total costs associated with the completion of the action. • Identification of financial resources and their sources (public, private, self-funded) and the extent to which these funds have already been secured.
R Relevant	Reflect the relevance to the goal of conservation priorities and challenges of Mediterranean natural beaches and be relevant to the context (national, regional).	• Seagrass conservation and Posidonia banquette management commitment targets. • Alignment with national/local commitments and participatory approach. • Consider potential challenges related to the Covid-19 pandemic.
T Time-Bound	Have a realistic and concrete timeframe for delivery.	• Milestones with starting and ending dates.

THE PLATFORM



An online platform has been created for the mobilisation of **the Joint Charter of Commitments for Mediterranean beaches with Posidonia**. The platform provides the tools for identifying and developing commitments and goals specific to each signatory, as well as information on the importance of Posidonia beach-dune systems in the Mediterranean and their conservation. The commitments and goals are developed through the **Action Commitment Form**, which outlines a plan of action for fulfilling the proposed commitments of each actor following the SMART criteria.

Upon developing the commitments, each actor signs the Charter through the online platform.

Signatories have the opportunity to showcase the development of their commitments through online testimonies that highlight these important achievements. The signatory's logo is added to the online platform to promote their commitment to the Joint Charter and encourage other actors to share these common values and work together to preserve Mediterranean natural beaches.

DETAILED ACTION COMMITMENT FORM

NAME OF STAKEHOLDER(S)/INSTITUTION(S)		
CONTACT PERSON (Name, Position, Email address)		
COMMITMENT TO WHICH THIS ACTION CORRESPONDS (Single or Multiple)		
TYPE OF COMMITMENT (Enabling action, policy action, impact action, Other type of action)		
BRIEF TITLE OF ACTION(S)		
LOCATION / GEOGRAPHICAL AREA		
MAIN TARGET GROUPS / TARGETED POPULATION OF THE COMMITMENT GOALS		
CALENDAR OF IMPLEMENTATION	Start date	
	End date	
OBJECTIVES (The objectives should be SMART i.e Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound)		
MEASUREABLE GOALS OF THE COMMITMENT		
DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION PLAN TO ACHIEVE THE COMMITMENT GOALS		
RESOURCES NEEDED TO ACHIEVE COMMITMENT GOALS (Budget, Staff)		
INDICATOR THAT WILL BE USED TO MEASURE AND ASSESS THE COMMITMENT GOALS AND REPORT ON PROGRESS (AND BASELINE)		
POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE COMMITMENT		
OUTPUT INDICATORS OF THE COMMITMENT		

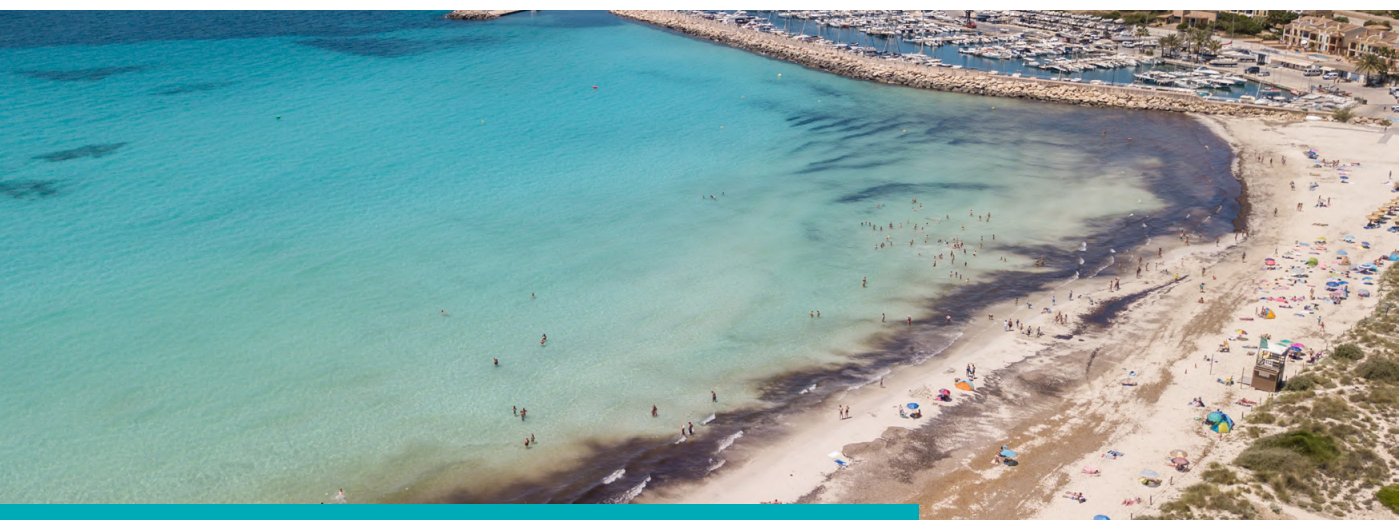
LINKS WITH PLEDGING COMMITMENTS

(Click box to choose one or several options)

- Commitment is linked to a key event (e.g. Ocean Summit, Ocean Decade, etc.)
- Commitment aligns with National Priorities
- Commitment aligns with the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

ATTACHMENTS THAT MAY BE RELEVANT TO THE ACTION COMMITMENT FORM (OPTIONAL)**THE SIGNATORY OF THIS COMMITMENT CONFIRMS THAT:**

- ✓ The commitment is SMART (Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound).
- ✓ Progress towards the commitment and achieving the relevant goals will be reported regularly (e.g. annually).
- ✓ Any clarifications required regarding the commitment will be provided as requested.





FOOTNOTES

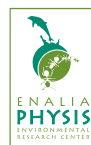
The Joint Charter of Commitments is open for signature by all organizations and stakeholders. It is not a formal certification and can be adapted by any country or region. Participation in the Charter is free of charge and provides an initial step towards supporting the gradual implementation of good practices.

We hope that in the near future the administrations forming part of the Charter are able to coordinate efforts, exchange experiences and build benchmarks of good practices as well as to develop community incentives to keep building the vision for **Beaches of Mediterranean Character**.

The present Charter originates from the POSBEMED2 initiative, funded by the Interreg-MED programme and is designed to address the challenges Mediterranean beaches currently face promoting nature-based management and supporting planning strategies that acknowledge the value of Posidonia beach-dune environments. It is built through the collaboration between regional governments, beach managers, scientific partners, tourism actors, associations and local communities.



REGIONE AUTONOMA
DE SARDIGNA
REGIONE AUTONOMA
DELLA SARDEGNA



In partnership with:



Project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund ¹



¹ General Directorate of Protected Areas and Biodiversity of Regional Government of the Balearic island is not funded by ERDF funds

An aerial photograph of a beautiful Mediterranean beach. The water is a vibrant turquoise color, transitioning to a deeper blue further out. Numerous sailboats and yachts are scattered across the water. The beach is sandy and populated with people, some sitting on towels or blankets, others standing near the water's edge. There are several beach umbrellas and a small structure on the left side of the beach. The sky is a clear, deep blue.

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SHARE YOUR BEST PRACTICES AND LEARN MORE FROM OUR WORK

If you wish to participate in and sign the Charter of Commitments, share your best practices and learn more from our work, please visit: <https://posbemed2.interreg-med.eu/>

For questions about the Charter please contact the following national and regional focal points:

Country / region	Organisation	Contact information
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