



Press Release

Cyprus celebrates Mediterranean Coast Day by exploring Nature-based Solutions for climate change adaptation

Eight DesirMED regions will meet in Larnaka, Cyprus, on 25–26 September to share approaches to climate adaptation. A Giant Interactive Map will invite citizens to explore, play and discover how Mediterranean ecosystems can help us adapt to climate change.

Larnaka, Cyprus, 24 September 2026 – How can Mediterranean coasts, cities and landscapes better prepare for rising temperatures, drought, wildfires, coastal erosion and other growing climate pressures? Over the next two days, the city of Larnaka in Cyprus will become a meeting point for experiences from across the Mediterranean, bringing together policymakers, scientists, practitioners, local organisations and citizens to explore how working with nature can contribute to climate resilience.

The programme begins on 25 September with the celebration of Mediterranean Coast Day 2026, led by the Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre (PAP/RAC) of UNEP/MAP and organised jointly with the Department of Environment of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment of Cyprus, with the support of DesirMED project partners. This year's edition will focus on Nature-based Solutions for coastal resilience in the Mediterranean.

Representatives from the eight regions involved in DesirMED will bring to Larnaka the climate adaptation interventions being developed in their territories, offering a Mediterranean laboratory of different approaches to challenges that are increasingly shared across borders. From coastal and marine ecosystems to forests, wetlands and urban areas, the project is exploring how solutions inspired and supported by nature can complement adaptation planning and help communities become more resilient to climate change.

The exchanges come against a backdrop of mounting pressure on Mediterranean coastal areas. Erosion, sea-level rise, water scarcity and biodiversity loss are already affecting communities and ecosystems across the region. Coast Day will provide a space to discuss these challenges and exchange practical experiences, while examining how Nature-based Solutions can be better integrated into coastal planning and decision-making.

“Nature-based Solutions are no longer an experiment in the Mediterranean. They are working today on beaches, in wetlands, and in cities, and the eight DesirMED regions show that they can be adapted to very different places. Mediterranean Coast Day is our chance to take these lessons out of individual projects and into coastal planning across the basin. We need governments, municipalities, and communities to see healthy coasts as their first line of defence against climate change,” said **Daria Povh Škugor**, Director of PAP/RAC.

Susanne Pedersen, Director of the IUCN Centre for Science and Knowledge, will join the Coast Day panel on the importance of Nature-based Solutions and resilient coastal planning, alongside the directors of PAP/RAC and the Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC), as well as other Mediterranean experts. Her remarks will bring IUCN's perspective on the role of



Press Release

science and knowledge in supporting the use of Nature-based Solutions for climate adaptation and on the importance of ensuring that these approaches deliver benefits for both biodiversity and people.

A Giant Map to walk across the Mediterranean

On 26 September, from 15:00 to 20:30, Europe Square will become a sea, hosting the DesirMED Adaptation Festival, “The Mediterranean We Desire”, and bringing climate adaptation to the wider public through a programme combining science, technology, games, arts and live performances.

At the centre of the square will be the DesirMED Giant Interactive Map, more than 160 square metres, produced by the International Union for Nature Conservation (IUCN) in collaboration with Giant Interactive Map. The large-scale installation turns the Mediterranean into a space that visitors can physically walk across, connecting climate challenges and adaptation experiences from Portugal to Cyprus.

Rather than simply looking at a map, visitors will be invited to explore it. Through augmented reality, QR challenges and physical games, they will discover Mediterranean ecosystems and species and learn how forests, wetlands, dunes, rivers and seagrass meadows can contribute to climate adaptation. The experience links these ecosystems to the work underway in DesirMED’s eight regions, showing how territories are experimenting with approaches inspired by Nature-based Solutions to respond to a changing climate.

*“Climate adaptation can sometimes feel distant or highly technical, but it is ultimately about the places where people live and the natural systems on which they depend,” said **Maher Mahjoub**, Director of the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation (IUCN Med). “With the Giant Interactive Map, we want people to walk across the Mediterranean, explore its unique ecosystems and understand that the climate challenges facing our territories are interconnected. Nature can be an important part of how we respond to them.”*

Theatre, music, and local voices

The Giant Map will also become a stage for ***Saving Mrs Euterpe – An Ice Cream Saga!***, an original theatre performance created for the Festival by Panayiotis Larkou, Dimitris Spyrou, Rebecca Katsaris and Mélissa Garcia Carro, taking audiences on a journey across the Mediterranean to explore climate change and adaptation.

The programme will also feature an interactive dance supported by the GreenLink project, while the Koullou|Makka Collective will lead a deaf- and disability-friendly walking workshop through Larnaka city centre. Drawings from Friday’s “Sketching on Location” workshop will be exhibited in the square, and the day will end with a concert starting at 20:00 by **The Windcraft Band**, a 20-piece multicultural ensemble of wind players and a rhythm section.

The festival is designed to engage not only specialists and decision-makers, but also families, young people and local residents in understanding what climate adaptation means for their own communities.

All festival activities are free and open to the public. The event is organised by the DesirMED partners, including the Cyprus Marine and Maritime Institute (CMMI), the Cyprus Energy Agency, IUCN, PAP/RAC, and the Euro-Mediterranean Center on Climate Change Foundation as



Press Release

coordinator, in collaboration with Mediterranean Coast Day 2026 and the GreenLink project. #WeTransforMED

Access to the festival programme, click [here](#). To access the festival programme, click [here](#).

For more information, photos and interviews, please contact:

Lourdes Lázaró Marín, Communications, IUCN Med, email : lourdes.lazaro@iucn.org

Sonsoles San Román, Communications, IUCN Med, email: sonsoles.sanroman@iucn.org

Notes for the editor:

About DesirMED project

DesirMED, coordinated by the Euro-Mediterranean Center on Climate Change (CMCC), brings together Mediterranean regions, researchers and organisations to support transformative climate adaptation and strengthen regional resilience, with a particular focus on Nature-based Solutions. The project works across eight Mediterranean regions: Beiras and Serra da Estrela (Portugal), Valencia region (Spain), Sardinia (Italy), Split-Dalmatia County (Croatia), Eastern Macedonia and Thrace (Greece), Région Sud – Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (France), the Province of Potenza (Italy), and Cyprus. Five Demonstrating Regions and three Replicating Regions work with scientific partners to connect knowledge with regional and local experience and develop pathways towards more climate-resilient territories.

DesirMED is funded by the European Union under the Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Programme. Swiss participants in the project are funded by the Swiss Confederation.

About IUCN and the Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is a membership union composed of sovereign states, government agencies, and civil society organisations. It draws on the expertise, resources, and reach of more than 1,600 member organisations and the input of over 19,000 experts. IUCN is the world's leading authority on the state of nature and natural resources and the measures needed to protect them. The IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation opened in Málaga in 2001 with support from the Spanish Ministry of the Environment, the Regional Government of Andalusia, and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID). The Centre's mission has been to influence, encourage, and assist Mediterranean societies in achieving the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, as well as the sustainable development of the Mediterranean region.

www.iucn.org/mediterranean | IUCNMed LinkedIn | Facebook: UICN - Centre de coopération pour la Méditerranée | X: @IUCN_Med | Instagram: @uicn_med | @iucnmed.bsky.social