



SwitchMed

Switching to circular economy in the Mediterranean

Implemented by



Co-funded by



Disclaimer

Funded by the European Union, the Government of Catalonia, and the Government of Italy, the SwitchMed Programme is implemented under the lead of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Economy Division, MedWaves, the United Nations Environment Programme Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) regional activity centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (formerly known as SCP/RAC) and in close coordination with the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement (DG NEAR). Each implementing organisation brings its specialised experience and tools to partner with the eight countries on activities that span policy development, capacity building, business support services, demonstration activities and networking.

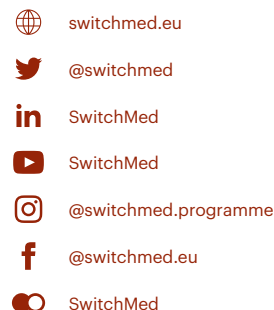
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Introduction

In a world with limited natural resources, it is necessary to find ways that can make human development and environmental protection compatible in order not to overshoot planetary boundaries. The southern Mediterranean region is particularly affected by environmental pressures. It faces many challenges such as water scarcity, rapid population growth, growing energy demand, and health impacts from pollution and climate change. Furthermore, urbanization is expected to double by 2050, which will lead to increasing waste generation, estimated at a total of 63 million tonnes per year. At the same time, natural resource supply is limited and threatened by a worldwide shortage and high price volatility. This scenario indicates that “business as usual” is no longer an option and that new approaches and solutions are urgently needed.

Launched by the European Union, the SwitchMed Programme has since 2013 demonstrated the potential to support and scale up the transition towards Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) practices which contribute to a green and circular economy in the southern Mediterranean. The opportunities associated with the adoption of such SCP practices have a clear link to supporting stabilisation of the region through sustainable and inclusive economic development and the protection of natural resources. Through policy development, demonstration activities and networking opportunities the SwitchMed Programme supports policy makers, eco-innovative small and medium sized enterprises, industries, start-ups and entrepreneurs in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia.

The SwitchMed programme is implemented by

- The **United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)** that is leading the Industry component activities,
- The **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Economy Division** in charge of the Policy-National component,
- **MedWaves**, the United Nations Environment Programme Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) **regional activity centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production** (formerly known as SCP/RAC), that is implementing the activities of the Policy-Regional, Start-ups and entrepreneurs and Networking Facility component.

The SwitchMed programme is carried out under the lead of UNIDO in close coordination with the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement (DG NEAR).

Industries

Scaling-up resource-efficient and circular production practices to industries

Designing out waste, reducing pollution and keeping products and materials longer in use, are cornerstones for a circular economy. These principles also outline UNIDO's activities under the second phase of SwitchMed that will continue to focus on the development of resource-efficient and circular industries in the region.

Transforming industries to become low carbon and resource-efficient while remaining competitive requires eco-innovative production models. To achieve this, UNIDO collaborates with local industries, service providers, business associations, government bodies, and international brands to demonstrate the business case for production models that can make the most use of material, water, and energy and improve the environmental performance of industries.

- In Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine, activities under the SwitchMed/MED TEST III project continue to focus on the uptake of **industrial resource efficiency practices** by reaching out to additional businesses, sectors, and regions. The activities focus on industry demonstrations, the training of local capacities, and to raise awareness for the business case of resource-efficient production among industries, policy makers and academic institutions.
- In Egypt, Israel, Morocco, and Tunisia, SwitchMed is introducing **circular economy practices into the value chain** of the textile and clothing industry (Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia) and the plastic sector (Israel). The focus is on advancing closed-loop industrial systems that can produce cleaner and achieve more value from products and materials. Local industry pilots will evaluate the feasibility for introducing circular economy practices into selected value chains. feasibility for introducing circular economy practices into the value chains.
- Under the Blue Economy component, UNIDO has identified priorities that can reduce the environmental impact, increase profitability and resilience in Morocco's fish processing industry and the aquaculture sector of Tunisia. UNIDO will demonstrate how the best available technologies and practices can unfold the potential for business models that turn challenges into opportunities while managing marine resources in an eco-efficient way.



Industrial resource efficiency

A resource-efficient production is the building block for a circular economy. In SwitchMed, UNIDO qualifies local expertise on the TEST methodology that enables industries to find cost-effective ways to improve their resource efficiency and environmental performance. This helps companies to save costs while improving their competitiveness.

Furthermore, a resource-efficient production also saves the region and community valuable resources such as water and energy and reduces the amount of waste and CO2 emissions.

Start-ups and entrepreneurs

Developing sustainable and circular business models

New companies and start-ups are key enablers of green and circular economy business models needed for the transition towards sustainable consumption and production patterns. Under the lead of MedWaves, enhanced business support services are provided for both business support organisations and entrepreneurs to foster the creation, incubation and acceleration of sustainable business models.

- Through SwitchMed, MedWaves is building an ecosystem to support sustainable business development through the creation of the [Switchers Support National Partnerships](#) which gather public and private Business Support Organisations (BSOs). Capacity-building, technical, financial and networking support are provided in order to boost their service offers targeting green and circular economy entrepreneurs.
- It is developing [sustainable business development tools](#), including TheSwitchers.org platform.
- The activities focus on [supporting green and circular entrepreneurs](#), through the training of 800 entrepreneurs to develop their Sustainable Business Models and the incubation of 80 circular start-ups. They are supported to access finance through the [Switchers Fund](#), which blends private and public money, technical assistance and grants. SwitchMed is also promoting match-making between circular start-ups and investors with the organization of pitch events.
- SwitchMed is building a network of change-makers through the [Switchers Community](#), a community of inspiring green entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean region.
- The programme is working on leveraging the potential of sustainable business models for the Blue Economy. Among other activities, it is developing a study on the potential of sustainable entrepreneurship to provide circular business solutions to environmental and social challenges faced by the Blue Economy.



TheSwitchers.org

TheSwitchers.org platform is a free and virtual business ecosystem to enable interactions among entrepreneurs, business providers, mentors and financial institutions willing to develop novel business models in the field of Green and Circular Economy.

It is particularly innovative thanks to the unique set of methodologies and tools for sustainable business development it offers through its Toolbox.

Policy

Creating an enabling policy environment

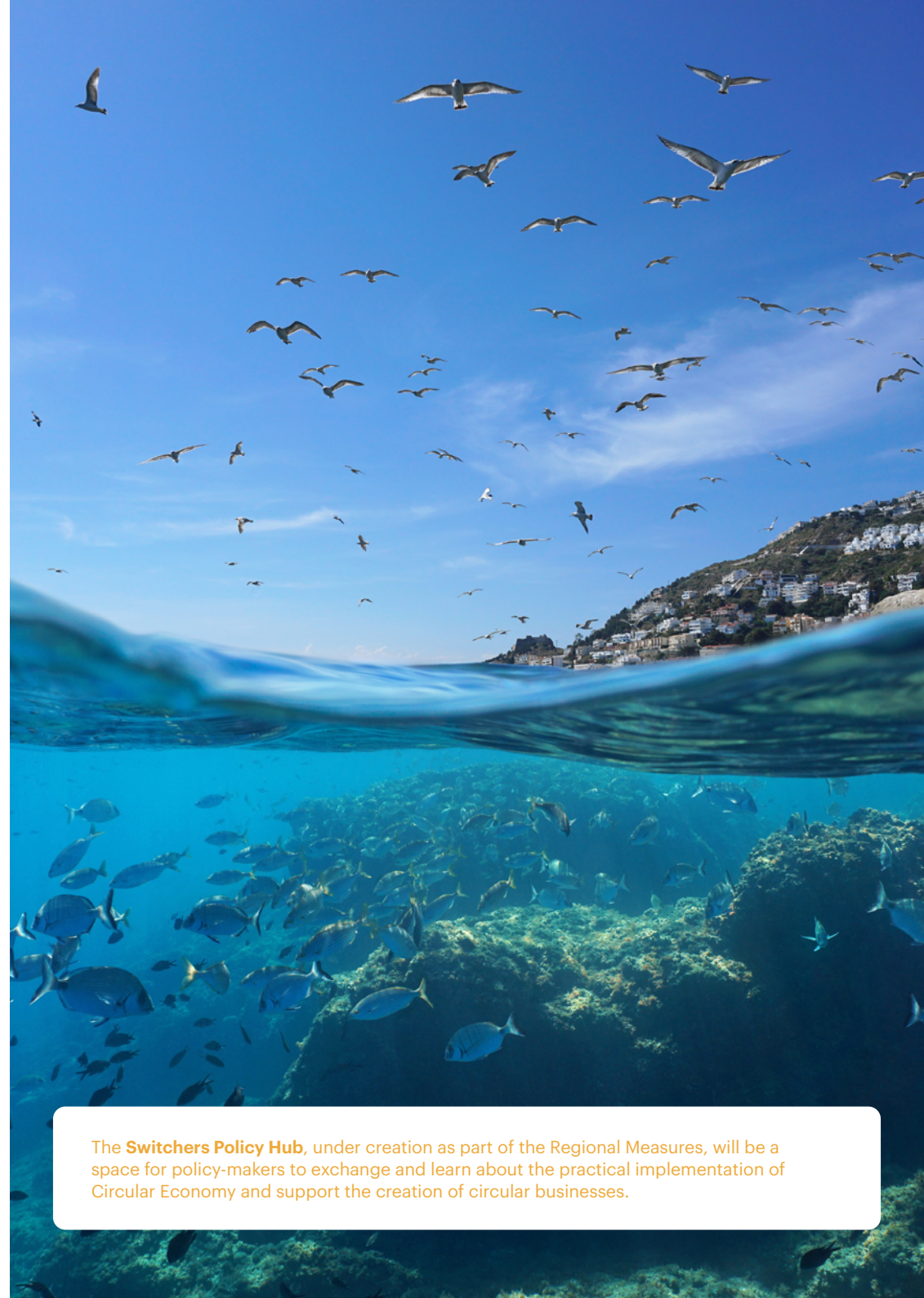
This component aims to strengthen the legal and policy framework which enables a transition towards Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) and a Circular Economy in the southern Mediterranean region.

At the regional level, MedWaves, through SwitchMed:

- has developed a set of **12 Regional Policy Measures** to support the development of sustainable businesses and strengthen the demand for sustainable products in the Mediterranean, adopted at COP22 of the Barcelona Convention in December 2021.
- is monitoring progress made by Mediterranean countries on the Barcelona Convention SCP Regional Action Plan. It has prepared 30 factsheets on **SCP indicators** with updated information on different topics and has joined forces with Plan Bleu Mediterranean Observatory to upload the information within MapX, an open-source geospatial platform.
- launched WeMed, the **Mediterranean Sustainability Award**, aiming to shed the light on the role of sustainable entrepreneurs as well as the challenges that they face and the different actors supporting them.
- is analysing the state of art and opportunities for the integration of **Circular Economy within Blue Economy** sectors in the Mediterranean.

At the national level, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) through SwitchMed:

- has been providing advisory services and technical support to the eight Mediterranean countries in the development of their **Sustainable Consumption and Production National Action Plans (SCP-NAPs)** and a variety of demonstration projects during the first phase of SwitchMed (2013-2018). Under its second phase (2019-2023), it continues these efforts and supports the implementation of the SCP-NAPs.
- focuses on establishing strong linkages between the country owned SCP-NAPs and the growing international experience between SCP and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, as well as national responses to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.
- will further look into national policies and support activities that promote the transition towards **SCP, circular and blue economies** in the Mediterranean region so as to best support their countries.



The **Switchers Policy Hub**, under creation as part of the Regional Measures, will be a space for policy-makers to exchange and learn about the practical implementation of Circular Economy and support the creation of circular businesses.

Networking Facility

Coordination, networking and communication

The Networking Facility supports the effective coordination and visibility of SwitchMed. It is structured in a way to ensure a regional approach to the programme, streamline communication among internal and external partners, and facilitate a smooth exchange of information. Under the lead of MedWaves, it provides different means for informing on the activities and results of the programme, which both raise awareness of the benefits of Sustainable Consumption and Production and help ensure sustainability of the action.

The Networking Facility is also responsible for integrating green entrepreneurs in the value chains through networking activities and open eco-innovation activities.

- SwitchMed is providing the highest possible visibility to the achievements of the programme's components and facilitating exchange of lessons learned within the community as well as with relevant stakeholders and initiatives in the region. For this purpose, SwitchMed is communicating among others through its website, newsletters and 6 different social networks.
- The Networking Facility ensures to both participate in and organize events, whether they are online or in person.
- It supports sustainable consumption by giving visibility to green entrepreneurs' products and services through **The Switchers Products platform**.
- SwitchMed helps match companies and public institutions in search of green and circular business solutions with entrepreneurs providing such solutions, using an open innovation approach, including through **The Switchers Eco-innovation platform**.
- To foster dissemination and capitalisation of the SwitchMed Blue Economy's results, the Networking Facility works at different scales targeting multiple audiences, enabling knowledge transfer and the uptake of best practices.



SwitchMed Connect

Organized by the Networking Facility, SwitchMed Connect is the flagship event of the programme. Start-ups and entrepreneurs, industry agents, policy and financial institutions come together every two years at SwitchMed Connect to build synergies, exchange knowledge and scale-up eco and social innovations in the Mediterranean region.

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