



**WE GO COOP**

**Interreg  
Euro-MED**



Co-funded by  
the European Union

## **WE GO COOP**

# **improving WETland GOVERNance through a COMMUNITY OF Practice**

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Specific objective: *RSO2.7 Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution*

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## ***An overview on Wetland Contracts in the Mediterranean***

*DELIVERABLE 1.4.1*

**Project Partner in charge: PP2-MEDWET**

**With the contribution of: ALL PROJECT PARTNERS**





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## Executive summary

This document provides a **comprehensive analysis of Wetland Contracts in the Mediterranean**, aiming to assess the state of the art, regulatory frameworks, scientific interest, and operational experiences, with particular focus on the WeGoCoop case studies.

The report examines the diffusion and characteristics of Wetland Contracts across Mediterranean countries, highlighting governance models, implementation approaches, and practical tools. **Between 1984 and 2025, a total of 253 wetland contracts were signed in the region**, with **France** accounting for 135 and **Italy** for 105, and 13 contracts in other European and MENA countries. Although only 8 of 24 Mediterranean countries have signed at least one contract, the instrument has been applied in 12 of the 24 coastal countries (50%), including about 70% of Mediterranean EU Member States and 20% of MENA countries. **Use of Wetland Contracts has increased significantly over the last two decades**, with peaks in 2015 (21 contracts) and 2022 (28 contracts). Rivers are the most frequently addressed ecosystem (180 contracts, ≈70%), followed by ponds and lagoons (21, ≈8%), lakes (10, ≈4%), aquifers (9, ≈3%), and coastal areas (7, ≈3%).

The report also reviews EU-funded projects supporting the development and testing of Wetland Contracts, with a focus on the **Interreg** and **LIFE** programmes, highlighting the critical role of EU funding in promoting participatory, multi-level governance for sustainable wetland management.

A dedicated section provides a **comparative overview of regulatory frameworks** in France, Italy, Spain, and Morocco. Only four Mediterranean countries have formally recognized Wetland Contracts: **France** (1981), **Italy** and **Morocco** (2015), and **Spain** (2020). France and Spain adopted soft-law approaches, while Italy and Morocco used national legislation; in Italy, formal recognition built upon a combination of prior soft- and hard-law instruments at river basin and regional levels.

Scientific interest in Wetland Contracts, a key indicator of their innovation, dissemination, and credibility, is also analysed. A global literature review covering 1981–2025 identified **117 scientific and technical papers** and 38 conference proceedings, books, manuals, and reports explicitly addressing Wetland Contracts.

The report presents WeGoCoop **case studies** from **Albania, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain**, examining the territorial context, contract co-creation process, involved stakeholders, and preliminary outcomes. A comparative analysis highlights common features, key success factors, and recurring barriers across the cases.

The document concludes by emphasizing the potential of Wetland Contracts as flexible and participatory tools for Mediterranean wetland governance, while stressing the need for stronger regulatory recognition, enhanced institutional capacity, and sustained financial support to ensure their effectiveness and replicability.



## Introduction

The Interreg Euro-MED 2021–2027 **WE GO COOP project** promotes the implementation of **Wetland Contracts**, a multilevel collaborative governance tool tested through various EU-funded initiatives. The **World Water Forum 2000** provides the first international definition of river contracts, describing them as agreements that enable “*the adoption of a system of rules in which public utility, economic performance, social value, and environmental sustainability are considered equally in the search for effective solutions for the rehabilitation of a river basin*”.

More widely, a Wetland Contract is a **voluntary and negotiated agreement** among public authorities, private stakeholders, and local communities aimed at the **integrated management, conservation, and sustainable use of wetland ecosystems**. It establishes shared objectives, responsibilities, and commitments for the protection, restoration, and sustainable governance of wetlands, often promoting collaborative actions, monitoring, and knowledge exchange. Wetland Contracts function as governance instruments to reconcile environmental, social, and economic interests while enhancing the resilience and ecological quality of wetland areas.

In this document, the term “Wetland Contract” refers to wetlands as defined by the **Ramsar Convention**, specifically including areas of marsh, fen, peatland, or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish, or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres. This definition is consistently applied throughout the WEGOCOOP project too.

It should be noted that Wetland Contracts are mentioned in the **Interreg Euromed 2021-2027** program manual, being the first among the EU’s territorial cooperation instruments to recognize this governance tool. In particular, Wetland Contracts are cited in the indicator fiche related to the program’s second specific objective (SO-2), which focuses on “*Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution*”, quoted in full as follows: “[...] *Further development and transferring of concrete solutions resulting from 2014–2020 programming period: [...] governance tool as wetland contracts for effective wetlands management [...]*”.

The WE GO COOP project seeks to establish a **Community of Practice (CoP)** among actors engaged in Environmental Contracts across the Mediterranean, building on the results of previous projects while facilitating the sharing of challenges, solutions, and best practices. In doing so, it promotes the exchange of experiences, methodologies, and strategies, and supports the transfer of the Wetland Contract tool to new contexts across the Euro-Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and Southern Mediterranean regions.



**Transnational cooperation** serves as the backbone of WE GO COOP's CoP development, bringing together diverse perspectives to address similar challenges. This approach enables the project to respond to wetland management needs at a broad scale while ensuring that its results are transferable. Moreover, it fosters coordination between organizations involved in previous initiatives and newly engaged key stakeholders.

Within the WE GO COOP project, a comprehensive survey was conducted to map the **state of the art of Wetland Contracts across the Mediterranean** region. This assessment encompassed all European and MENA countries bordering the Mediterranean, providing a broad and detailed understanding of the development, implementation, and evolution of these collaborative governance tools. The survey traces the history of Wetland and River Contracts from their inception in the **1980s in France**, when the first river contracts were introduced, up to **December 2025**. It examines both the legal and regulatory frameworks, as well as practical experiences, initiatives, and projects that have shaped the adoption of Wetland Contracts over the decades.

This piece of work serves multiple purposes: it establishes a **baseline of knowledge** for the Mediterranean region, identifies **key trends and challenges**, and fosters the connection among actors engaged in Environmental Contracts. By synthesizing national and transnational experiences, this document provides a foundation for further development, replication, and adaptation of the Wetland Contract tool across diverse ecological and socio-political contexts.

#### **Guide to reading this document:**

- **Section 2** offers an overview of Wetland Contracts in the Mediterranean, including country-specific developments in EU and MENA countries.
- **Section 3** summarizes EU-funded projects related to Wetland Contracts, highlighting initiatives under Interreg, LIFE, and other programmes.
- **Section 4** reviews the regulatory frameworks that support Wetland Contracts, with detailed coverage for France, Morocco, Italy, and Spain.
- **Section 5** presents the interest and contributions of the scientific community, including papers, conference proceedings, and manuals.
- **Section 6** details WE GO COOP case studies across Mediterranean countries, followed by a comparative analysis.
- **Sections 7 and 8** provide final remarks and comprehensive references, including literature and web sources.

This structure allows readers to navigate from general concepts and frameworks to specific national and project-based experiences, providing both a broad overview and detailed insights into the implementation and development of Wetland Contracts in the Mediterranean region.



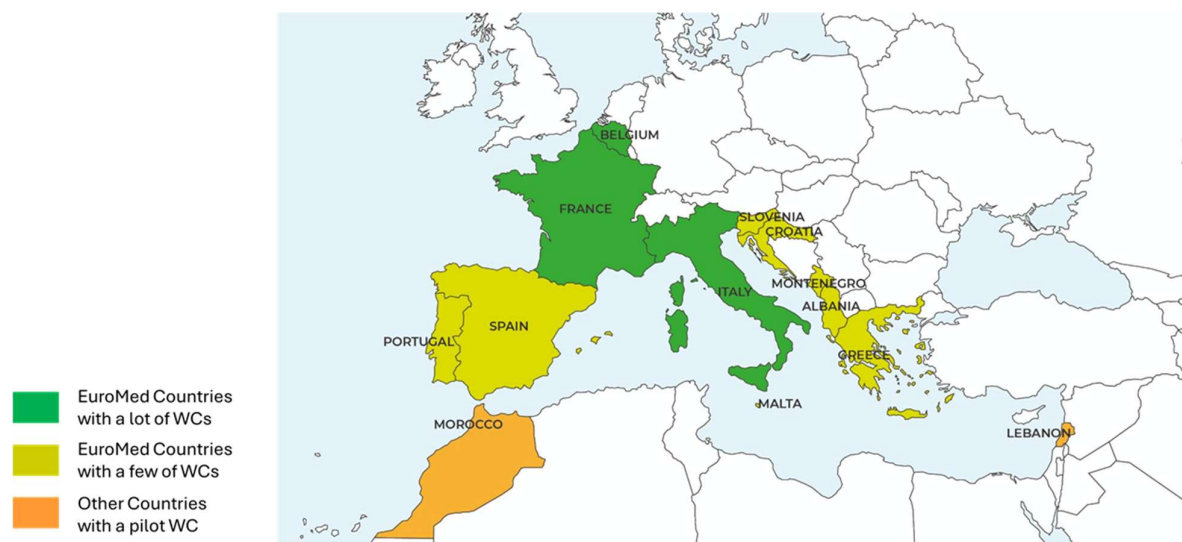
# 1 Wetland Contracts in the Mediterranean

## 1.1 General overview

**Wetland contracts** have emerged over recent decades as a significant instrument for the conservation and sustainable management of wetland ecosystems across the Mediterranean region. These voluntary agreements - bringing together local stakeholders, landowners, public authorities, and conservation organizations - seek to balance ecological protection with socio-economic interests, helping to preserve biodiversity, improve water quality, and sustain the multiple ecosystem services that wetlands provide.

The third edition of the **Mediterranean Wetland Outlook (MWO-3)**, published in July 2025 by the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory (MWO) at the Tour du Valat Foundation, highlights wetland contracts as key governance tools for the integrated and sustainable management of wetlands, underscoring the growing recognition and interest in these instruments across the Mediterranean region<sup>1</sup>.

The figure below shows the Mediterranean countries (plus Belgium – not Mediterranean) that, by the end of 2025, have developed experience with wetland contracts, using varying shades to reflect the level of experience achieved. These experiences cover the entire Mediterranean region, highlighting their widespread geographic reach.



<sup>1</sup> <https://medwet.org/mediterranean-wetlands-outlook-3-mwo-3/>

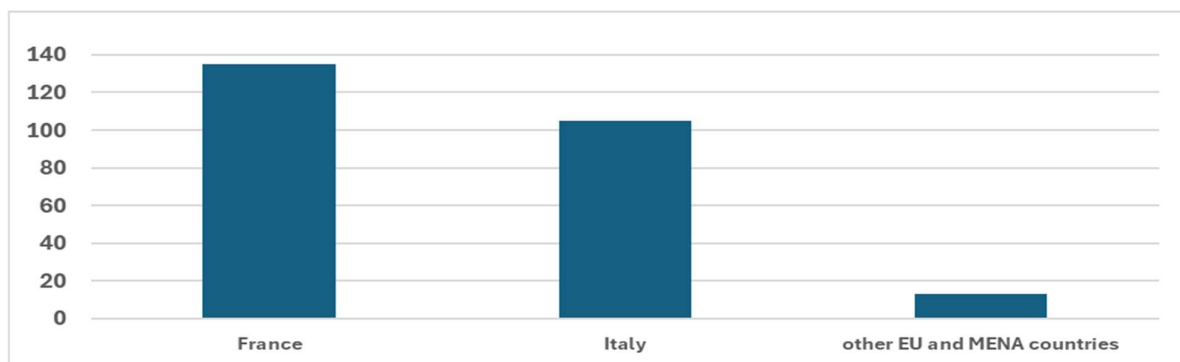


**France** stands out as a pioneering force in the development of wetland contracts, having initiated some of the earliest programs in the early 1980s. Over the years, it has accumulated the largest number of wetland contract experiences in the Mediterranean, shaping a rich and diverse body of practical knowledge and policy approaches. **Italy** follows closely as the second most active country in the region, with a variety of contractual models implemented across different wetland contexts, reflecting both regional governance structures and the evolving priorities of wetland conservation.

Beyond these two leading countries, other European Mediterranean states have also embraced wetland contracts to varying degrees, adapting the concept to local environmental and institutional settings. **Albania, Croatia, Greece, Malta, Montenegro, Portugal, Slovenia,** and **Spain**, offer valuable insights into how different legal frameworks and stakeholder dynamics influence contract design and outcomes. By the end of 2025, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Cyprus, remain the only EU countries bordering the Mediterranean that have not yet launched any wetland contract initiatives.

In the wider Mediterranean, including the **MENA region** (Middle East and North Africa), interest in collaborative wetland management instruments is growing. While experiences vary in scale and maturity, examples from a country such as Morocco highlights emerging efforts to integrate wetland contracts into broader environmental governance and sustainable development agendas.

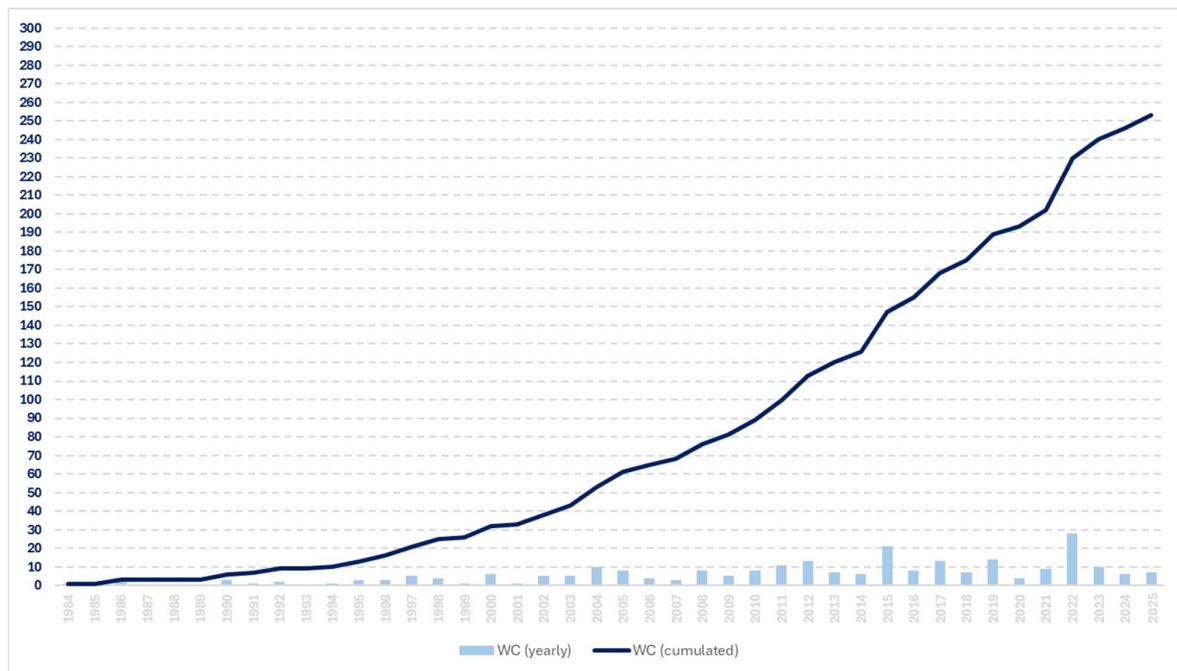
In total, **over the past 45 years (1984-2025), 253 wetland contracts have been signed across the Mediterranean region**, namely 135 in France<sup>2</sup>, 105 in Italy, and 13 in other European and MENA countries bordering the Mediterranean. These findings are drawn from the detailed analyses presented in the subsequent chapters.



<sup>2</sup> Considering only the cases referring to the Rhône-Mediterranean-Corsica river basin district and counting only once those cases in which a contract related to a given territory has been signed multiple times over the years.



It can be observed that the overall trend has been progressively increasing since the early 1980s, with notable accelerations in 2015 (21 cases) and 2022 (28 cases), and other relevant increases in 2004, 2011, 2012, 2017, 2019 and 2023 (between 10 and 15 cases each). These eight years with the highest number of wetland contracts signed for the first time all fall within the last twenty years, a period marked by the greatest development of this instrument in the Mediterranean.



Several noteworthy observations can be drawn from the following table:

- although only 8 of the 24 Mediterranean countries (one third) have at least one signed Wetland Contract, the governance tool has been implemented in 12 of the 24 countries bordering the Mediterranean (50%), including 10 of the 14 Mediterranean EU countries ( $\approx 70\%$ ) and 2 of the 10 Mediterranean countries in the MENA region (20%);
- the types of aquatic ecosystems most frequently covered by wetland contracts in the Mediterranean are rivers (180 out of 253,  $\approx 70\%$ ), followed by ponds and lagoons (21 out of 253,  $\approx 8\%$ ), lakes (10 out of 253,  $\approx 4\%$ ), aquifers (9 out of 253,  $\approx 3\%$ ), coasts (7 out of 253,  $\approx 3\%$ ), deltas (2 out of 253,  $<1\%$ ), marine protected areas (1 out of 253,  $<1\%$ ), and other types (23 out of 253,  $\approx 9\%$ ).

REGION	COUNTRY	NUMBER OF CONTRACTS PER TYPOLOGY OF WATER BODY								
		RIVER	POND LAGOON	LAKE	AQUIFER	COAST	DELTA	MPA	OTHER	TOTAL
EU	FRANCE (Med basins)	116	7	2	4	5	1	0	0	135
EU	ITALY	62	7	8	1	2	1	1	23	105
EU	PORTUGAL	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
EU	SPAIN	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
EU	GIBRALTAR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
EU	MONACO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
EU	SLOVENIA	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
EU	CROATIA	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
EU	BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
EU	ALBANIA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
EU	MONTENEGRO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
EU	GREECE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
EU	MALTA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
EU	CYPRUS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MENA	TURKEY	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MENA	SYRIA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MENA	LEBANON	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
MENA	ISRAEL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MENA	PALESTINE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MENA	EGYPT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MENA	LYBIA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MENA	TUNISIA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MENA	ALGERIA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MENA	MOROCCO	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	4
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>180</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>253</b>

Countries in which, whatever is the number of WCs already signed, there are WCs that are on their way to be signed

The following chapters review the current state of the art of wetland contracts across the Mediterranean, synthesizing key figures from France and Italy to other European and MENA countries

## 1.2 France

The first river restoration operations in France were launched in the early 1970s in response to the increasing pollution of watercourses. These operations, part of the “*Rivières Propres*” (Clean Rivers) initiative, represented an initial attempt of integrated and participatory water resource management, involving various local and institutional actors. The initiative aimed to improve water quality through concrete actions, such as wastewater treatment and the protection of riverine ecosystems. However, these efforts were often fragmented and lacked long-term planning.

To address these challenges, in 1981 the **River Contract** (*Contrat de rivière*) was established, a contractual instrument that allowed for the consolidation and expansion of the efforts initiated under the “*Rivières Propres*” operations. Since then, the tool has steadily developed across many areas of France, particularly in the Rhône Valley and in Mediterranean catchments, reaching its peak of diffusion shortly before the Covid-19 pandemic. Over the past 40 years, the French approach to River Contract was first extended to coastal and marine environments (1993) and later to an even broader range of water bodies, including lakes, aquifers, wetlands, and others.



The main source of information on environmental contracts in France is the **web platform Gest'Eau**<sup>3</sup>, which was created and is managed by the **OIEau** (International Office for Water)<sup>4</sup>, with financial support from the **OFB** (French Office for Biodiversity)<sup>5</sup> and both financial and technical support from the French **Ministry of Ecological Transition**.

According to Gest'Eau, at the **national level**, so far a total of **297** processes have been initiated, resulting in the signing of **229** Environmental Contracts<sup>6</sup>, while in the **Rhône-Méditerranée-Corse (RMC) basin district** alone, **135** contracts have been signed (58 % of the Contracts signed in France)<sup>7</sup>.

This document focuses on the Rhône-Mediterranean region, as it is the only region in France that drains into the Mediterranean Sea and is therefore considered particularly significant for analysing the development of wetland contracts within the broader Mediterranean macro-region. However, some notable national-level elements are also highlighted:

- at national level, Wetland Contracts cover **various types of aquatic ecosystems**, including rivers (248 cases), coasts (14 cases), ponds (11 cases), aquifers (7 cases), lakes (4 cases), and deltas (1 case);
- at national level, the **duration of the governance process**, measured from the earliest available date among the initial stages (conception, validation of preliminary dossier, and establishment of the wetland committee) to the signing of the Wetland Contract, is on average **5.4 years** (the range spans from a minimum of a few months to a maximum of 21 years);
- at national level, the **duration of the implementation phase**, measured from the signing of the contract to the end of the declared duration (including any extensions) or the official contract closure date, is on average **6.1 years** (the range spans from a minimum of 2 years to a maximum of 15 years).

The data on the duration of the preparatory phase of the Wetland Contract and the subsequent implementation of its commitments show that in France, governance processes are not rapid. Compared to action programs that are typically short-term, the time required to implement commitments extends into the medium term.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gesteau.fr/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.oieau.org/en>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ofb.gouv.fr>

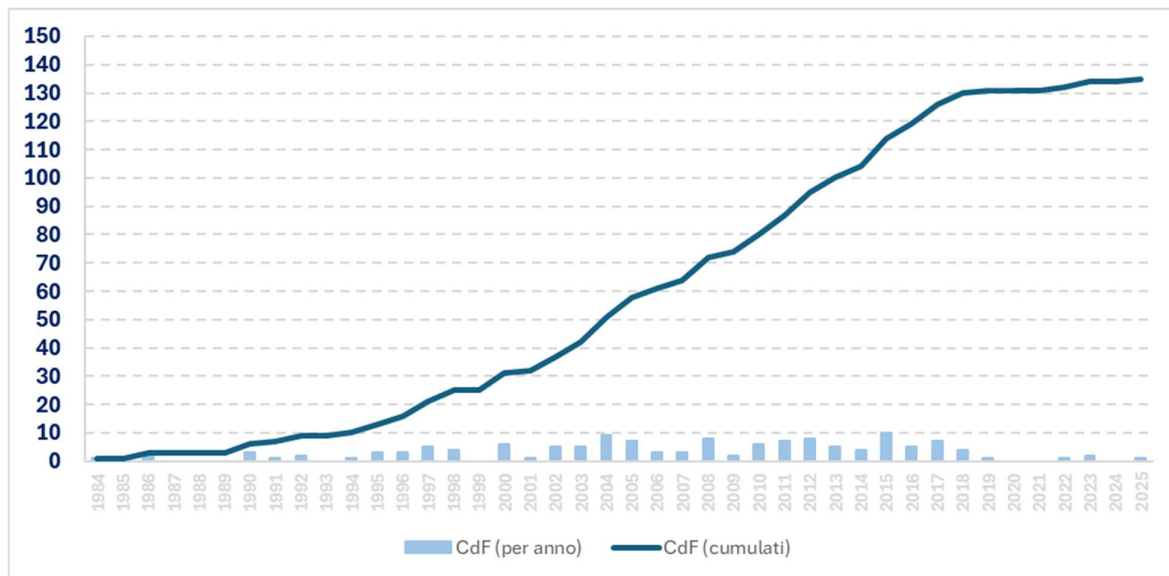
<sup>6</sup> The real total number of Wetland Contracts signed in France is **285**, including contract renewals. Of the **229** contracts signed at least once (only 1 abandoned after the first signature), of which **37** were signed twice, **8** were signed three times, and **1** was signed four times. For the purposes of the census presented in this report, **contracts signed more than once are counted only once**.

<sup>7</sup> The real total number of Wetland Contracts signed in the Rhône-Méditerranée region is **164**, including contract renewals. Of the **135** contracts signed at least once, of which **23** were signed twice, **5** were signed three times, and **1** was signed four times. For the purposes of the census presented in this report, **contracts signed more than once are counted only once**.



Turning to the extent of wetland contracts in the Rhône-Mediterranean region, the following graph illustrates the development trend of this governance instrument over the last 45 years (1984-2025). The figure presents both annual and cumulative data, providing an overview of the evolution and consolidation of wetland contracts throughout the entire period.

It can first be observed that the very **first wetland contract in the Rhône-Mediterranean region, and in the Mediterranean as a whole, was signed in 1984**. This was the *Ardèche Claire River Contract*, an early experimental agreement aimed at improving water quality, coordinating wastewater management, and reconciling environmental protection with local development needs in the Ardèche river basin. The contract brought together local authorities and stakeholders around a shared, long-term vision for river and wetland management, laying the foundations for subsequent contractual approaches in France and beyond.



During the initial phase (1984-1999), the development of wetland contracts in the Rhône-Mediterranean region remained relatively modest, with a total of 25 cases recorded. The subsequent period (2000-2019) experienced a marked expansion, with 104 contracts implemented, likely driven in part by the momentum generated by the Water Framework Directive (Directive 2000/60/EC), which strongly encouraged integrated, participatory, and basin-scale water governance across Europe.

The year with the highest number of Wetland Contracts signed in the RMC region was 2015 (10 cases), followed by 2004 (9 cases) and 2008 and 2012 (8 cases each).

In more recent years (2020-2025), only 4 new cases have been recorded. This slowdown should be interpreted considering the evolution of contractual



governance pathways in France, which have progressively shifted from Environmental Contracts to **Ecological Transition Contracts**, and more recently to **Water and Climate Contracts**.

A more in-depth analysis in the RMC region is not possible, as the founding documents of the signed wetland contracts are available on the Gest'Eau platform for only about 10% of cases. In particular, the availability of the documents is as follows<sup>8</sup> (the French terms for the documents, as listed on the Gest'Eau platform, are indicated in parentheses).

Essential elements of the environmental contract <i>Constitutifs du contrat de milieu</i>	Quantity	Percentage
Application dossier <i>Dossier de candidature</i>	36 out of 135	≈27%
Orders and resolutions <i>Arrêtés et délibérations</i>	31 out of 135	≈23%
Final dossier <i>Dossier définitif</i>	58 out of 135	≈43%
Action plan <i>Programme d'actions</i>	33 out of 135	≈24%
Cartographic atlas <i>Atlas cartographique</i>	17 out of 135	≈13%
Contractual documents and amendments <i>Document contractuel et avenant</i>	25 out of 135	≈18%
Studies and reports <i>Etudes et rapports</i>	25 out of 135	≈18%
Contract assessment <i>Bilan du contrat</i>	40 out of 135	≈30%
Application dossier <i>Dossier de candidature</i>	36 out of 135	≈27%

Further in-depth analyses on a selected number of case studies can be carried out based on this basic information. It is worth noting that the Gest'Eau platform provides **reference contacts** for 44 out of 135 contracts (≈ 33%) and **reference websites** for 103 out of 135 contracts (≈ 76%). However, for older contracts, these contacts and websites are likely outdated and, in many cases, no longer accessible.

With the development of the Ecological Transition Contracts - CRTes (initially *Contrats Territoriaux de Relance et de Transition Écologique*, which from 2024 - while retaining the same acronym - became *Contrats pour la Réussite de la Transition Écologique*) -, Environmental Contracts have ceased to be promoted, effectively being absorbed into these new contractual governance instruments introduced into the French regulatory framework starting in 2020.

<sup>8</sup> In the Gest'Eau portal, in addition to the documents listed in the table, the following categories are also available; they are not considered in this study as they are not relevant part of the Wetland Contracts: Communication actions (*Actions de communication*), Terms of reference (*Cahiers des charges*), Internal regulations (*Règlement intérieur*), and Meeting minutes and other documents (*Réunions: compte-rendus et autres documents*).



By **early 2020**, approximately **80**<sup>9</sup> Ecological Transition and Recovery Contracts (CRTEs) had been signed in France; three years later, by **late 2025**, this number had risen to **910**<sup>10</sup> (of which approximately 300 in the Rhône–Mediterranean region).

In France, a Environmental Contract and a CRTE operate at different but complementary territorial scales and with overlapping objectives in terms of ecological management.

An Environmental Contract is a voluntary, legally recognized contract that brings together local stakeholders - such as municipalities, intercommunal structures, water agencies, associations, and citizens - to manage and restore the ecological quality of a specific water body and typically part of or its whole catchment. Its focus is primarily water management, biodiversity conservation, flood prevention, and ecological restoration. It defines objectives, actions, and funding for water-related projects and often spans several years.

A CRTE, by contrast, is a broader territorial contract initiated by the State, aiming to combine economic recovery, ecological transition, and local development at an intercommunal or departmental scale. CRTEs cover multiple domains - urban planning, mobility, energy, agriculture, digital infrastructure, economic development, and ecological protection - taking a cross-sectoral approach to sustainable territorial transformation. Ecological transition, including water management, biodiversity, and climate adaptation, is one transversal axis among many.

The relationship is therefore integrative: actions and projects defined in an Environmental Contract can be incorporated into a CRTE when they align with its territorial objectives. This integration allows the Environmental Contract to benefit from CRTE funding and support, ensures coherence with broader territorial development plans, and simplifies coordination between different ecological and sectoral initiatives. Essentially, the CRTE can serve as an umbrella framework that includes Environmental Contracts as a specialized component for water and aquatic ecosystem management.

**Water and Climate Contracts** (*Contrats Eau et Climat* - CEC) are territorial governance instruments promoted by French water agencies and local authorities, designed to support integrated water management and climate adaptation at the basin or local scale. They bring together stakeholders to coordinate actions on water quality, quantity, biodiversity, and climate resilience within specific territories. The main features of Contrats Eau et Climat can be summarized as follows:

- they support the implementation of strategic local action programmes that are fully aligned with the agency's objectives.

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<sup>9</sup> [https://www.connaissancedesenergies.org/afp/pres-de-80-contrats-de-transition-ecologique-signes-en-18-mois-en-france-200304?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.connaissancedesenergies.org/afp/pres-de-80-contrats-de-transition-ecologique-signes-en-18-mois-en-france-200304?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>10</sup> <https://anct.gouv.fr/programmes-dispositifs/contrats-pour-la-reussite-de-la-transition-ecologique/crte-signes>



- they are based on a shared diagnostic and negotiated local priorities, allowing for tailored measures that meet territorial needs while contributing to environmental and climate resilience at the basin scale.
- they cover three thematic pillars: (a) aquatic environments, wetlands, and biodiversity; (b) protection and equitable management of water resources, including efficient water use; (c) water pollution management, encompassing sanitation and integrated stormwater solutions.

Signing a *Contrat Eau et Climat* means the local partner agrees to implement the agreed programme across several years, with financial support and aid rates guaranteed for the duration of the contract. These contracts also offer access to specific types of technical and financial support for eligible actions under each thematic component. Governance of each Contract typically involves a multi-stakeholder body (e.g. a watershed committee or governance group) that monitors progress, facilitates coordination among partners, and evaluates results.

Currently, no official national-level figure exists reporting the total number of Water and Climate Contracts signed in France. Each river basin agency (*Agence de l'eau*) and local authority typically reports on the contracts it supports, but a unified national count does not yet exist in publicly accessible form. While several contracts are active in different territories, comprehensive data aggregating all signed contracts at the national scale is not publicly available.

In the *Rhône-Méditerranée-Corse* basin, the *Agence de l'eau Rhône-Méditerranée-Corse* (RMC) plays a central role in financing and supporting territorial water governance instruments, including Water and Climate Contracts. These contracts are designed to mobilize local stakeholders and intercommunal authorities to implement coordinated, multi-year programs that address both sustainable water management and climate adaptation priorities at the scale of watershed territories. They typically include actions to improve water quality, restore aquatic environments, enhance resilience to climate impacts, and integrate local development needs through participatory planning and shared financing frameworks.

Within the RMC basin, Water and Climate Contracts serve as operational tools that build on existing governance frameworks - such as *Schéma d'Aménagement et de Gestion des Eaux* (SAGE) and *Plan de Bassin d'Adaptation au Changement Climatique* (PBACC) -, providing targeted financial support for agreed priorities negotiated between local authorities and the agency. Under the agency's 12th intervention programme (2025-



2030)<sup>11</sup>, these contracts are positioned as key instruments for accelerating climate-adaptive water management at the intercommunal level<sup>12</sup>.

The first example, signed on 3 July 2025, is the *Contrat Eau et Climat de la Métropole de Lyon*<sup>13</sup> for 2025-2027, concluded by the *Métropole de Lyon* together with the RMC Water Agency and other partners. With a total budget of approximately €286 million, including €53.9 million from the agency, this ambitious contract aims to restore and protect aquatic and wetland environments, improve sanitation infrastructure, preserve water resources, and reduce pollution, with nearly 190 actions planned.

Following this, the *Contrat Eau et Climat de l'Arve*<sup>14</sup> was recently (28 October 2025) signed by the mixed syndicate for the Arve river and its tributaries, together with local authorities, the State, financial partners, and the RMC agency. Covering approximately 150 projects over 2026-2027, with about €25 million in agency support, it aims to advance water resource stewardship and climate resilience across the basin territory.

Finally, the *Contrat Eau et Climat des bassins de la Sereine et du Cottey*<sup>15</sup>, signed on 18 December 2025 by local authorities, the Prefecture of Ain, and the Agence de l'eau Rhône-Méditerranée-Corse, covers 36 actions over 2026-2029, with a total budget of €8.5 million (nearly €3.8 million supported by the agency). Key measures include restoring wetlands and aquatic habitats, reducing domestic water pollution, improving water use efficiency, and implementing biodiversity-friendly projects such as hedgerow planting and pond restoration.

It is noteworthy that in the three cases described, the RMC Water Agency contributes to the financing of the investment programmes at different rates - covering approximately 19 % of the total budget for the Métropole de Lyon contract, 33 % for the Arve contract, and 45 % for the Sereine and Cottey basins - corresponding to an average contribution of around 32 %. This highlights the **leverage effect** of the agency's subsidy granted to *Contrat Eau et Climat* in mobilizing additional resources from the local territories involved.

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<sup>11</sup> The 12th Intervention Programme of the Agence de l'Eau Rhône-Méditerranée-Corse (RMC) is the basin-scale multi-year strategic funding framework that will guide the agency's actions and financial support over the period 2025-2030. Officially titled "Sauvons l'eau 2025-2030" ("Let's Save Water 2025-2030"), it was adopted in October 2024 and came into force on 1 January 2025 after nearly two years of consultation with stakeholders including elected officials, water users, farmers, industries and associations. The programme serves as one of the main levers for implementing the basin's planning instruments - notably the Water Development and Management Plans (SDAGE) for Rhône-Méditerranée and Corse - and is designed to address key challenges such as achieving good ecological water status, adapting territories to climate change, restoring biodiversity and strengthening territorial solidarity. Operationally, it allocates financial support to projects and governance instruments (including *Contrats Eau et Climat*) across different thematic areas, with an overall aid capacity of around €520 million per year on average (about €3.1 billion over six years) and enhanced aid rates for ambitious actions.

<sup>12</sup> <https://eurumc.fr/upload/docs/application/pdf/2025-01/transv-contrats.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.lyoncapitale.fr/actualite/la-metropole-de-lyon-signe-son-contrat-eau-et-climat-a-hauteur-de-286-millions-deuros?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.lyoncapitale.fr/actualite/la-metropole-de-lyon-signe-son-contrat-eau-et-climat-a-hauteur-de-286-millions-deuros?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

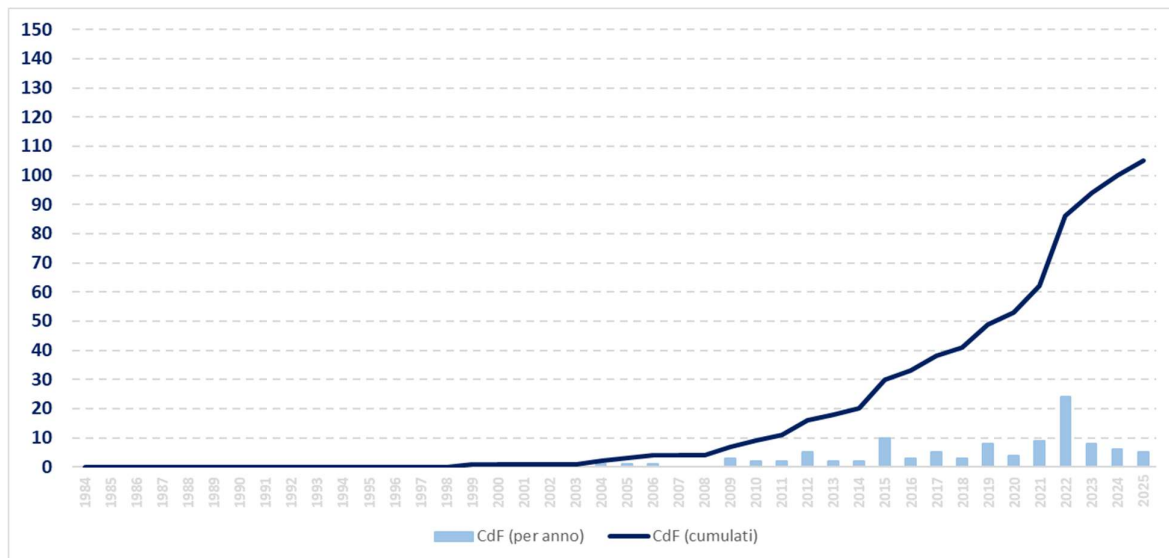
<sup>14</sup> [https://www.sauvonsleau.fr/jcms/e\\_31596/contrat-eau-et-climat-de-l-arve-2026-2027--c-est-signe-](https://www.sauvonsleau.fr/jcms/e_31596/contrat-eau-et-climat-de-l-arve-2026-2027--c-est-signe-)

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.sauvonsleau.fr/jcms/e\\_31729/un-contrat-eau-et-climat-des-bassins-de-la-sereine-et-du-cottey](https://www.sauvonsleau.fr/jcms/e_31729/un-contrat-eau-et-climat-des-bassins-de-la-sereine-et-du-cottey)



### 1.3 Italy

The main source of information on Wetland Contracts in Italy consists of various surveys published over the years (official or grey literature), some of which were comprehensive at the time of publication, while others were partial but included detailed information on the cases surveyed. Currently, the most comprehensive sources of information are certain meetings of the National River Contracts Table (TNCdF), during which the state of play of some Italian Wetland Contracts was presented, and the official websites of some Wetland Contracts and/or the institutional websites (i.e., the respective online official registers) of some of the public bodies involved in the Wetland Contracts.



A **National River Contracts Platform**<sup>16</sup> has been established as part of the activities of the National Observatory of River Contracts, serving as an online repository for Italian Wetland Contracts. As of December 2025, the platform was still populated only in a test phase.

The experience of wetland contracts in Italy originated thanks to a pilot initiative by two administrative regions, *Lombardy* and *Piedmont*, which launched an experimental river contract program in the early 2000s. Notably, the first ever River Contract in Italy, the *Olona-Bozzente-Lura*, was signed in *Lombardy* in **2004**, followed by the *Seveso* River Contract in 2006, also in *Lombardy*. The pilot initiative in *Piedmont* began in 2007, resulting within

<sup>16</sup> <https://contrattidifiume.mase.gov.it/>



three years in the signing of the *Sangone River Contract* in 2009, and both the *Orba* and *Belbo River Contracts* in 2010.

With the establishment of the National Observatory of River Contracts in 2018, the River Area Management Plans (*Piani di Gestione delle Aree Fluviali* - PGAF) from the Autonomous Province of *Bolzano* and the Reserve Networks (*Reti di Riserve* - RdR) from the Autonomous Province of *Trento* have been aligned with the Wetland Contract model. The first PGAF in *South Tyrol* dates to 1999, preceding the initial pilot Wetland Contracts in *Lombardy* and *Piedmont*. However, at the time, this governance tool was not based on the French experience and was not yet recognized as a Wetland Contract. Thus, while PGAF and RdR are now retrospectively considered part of the Italian Wetland Contracts, the pioneering experiences in Italy remain those from *Lombardy* and *Piedmont*.

The year 2007 also saw the launch of the **National River Contracts Table** (*Tavolo Nazionale dei Contratti di Fiume* – TNCdF) within the **Agenda 21 Italy** initiative, an informal network of stakeholders engaged with the Wetland Contracts, which played a key role in promoting its awareness and wider adoption across Italy.

From that moment until 2014, largely thanks to the regular organization of **congress-style meetings** of the members of the TNCdF, the number of wetland contracts signed experienced a first significant growth. Among the most significant initiatives of the National River Contracts Table (TNCdF) is the **National Charter of River Contracts**, a statutory document that, for the first time, framed Wetland Contracts in Italy, to which all Italian administrative regions subsequently adhered.

In 2015, a **reform of the Environmental Code** (Legislative Decree 152/2006) formally recognized the Wetland Contract within the Italian legal framework, giving a significant boost to the adoption and dissemination of this governance instrument across Italy.

Three years later, with a decree from the Minister of the Environment, the **National Observatory of River Contracts** was established. Through institutional engagement and capacity-building activities, it further promoted the growth of wetland contracts signed in Italy.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, wetland contracts continued to be signed in Italy between 2020 and 2021, with **2022 recording the highest number of contracts signed in a single year (24 cases)**. Only 2015 (10 cases), 2021 (9 cases), 2019 and 2023 (8 cases) had previously recorded higher values than just a few cases per year.



As of December 2025, **105** Wetland Contracts have been signed in Italy<sup>17</sup>. Over the 22 years from 2004 to 2025, an average of **nearly 5 wetland contracts per year** were signed in Italy, rising to **about 8 contracts per year** in the last decade.

Currently, there are still several wetland contract initiatives underway in Italy, with more expected to be signed soon, reflecting a trend of continued significant growth, supported by a favourable regulatory framework at the national, river basin authority, and regional levels.

For 43 out of the 105 Wetland Contracts signed in Italy (approximately 41%), data on the number of signatories, disaggregated into public and private actors, were available. In total, 1,428 signatories were identified, comprising 909 public actors (approximately 64%) and 519 private actors (approximately 36%). These figures indicate a substantial level of formal stakeholder involvement; however, with regard to substantive engagement - including degrees of active participation, perceived legitimacy, effectiveness of inputs, and commitment uptake - additional, in-depth evaluation is required.

Essential elements of the environmental contract	Quantity	Percentage
Memorandum of Understanding <i>Documento di Intenti</i>	20 out of 105	≈19%
Information dossier <i>Quadro Conoscitivo</i>	51 out of 105	≈49%
Strategic dossier <i>Quadro Strategico</i>	44 out of 105	≈42%
Action plan <i>Programma di Azione</i>	65 out of 105	≈62%
Agreement act <i>Atto di impegno</i>	56 out of 105	≈53%

A more in-depth analysis in Italy is not possible, as the founding documents of the signed wetland contracts are available for only about 14% of cases. In particular, the availability of the documents is as follows (the Italian terms for the documents are indicated in parentheses).

Finally, it should be noted that in Italy - in addition to contracts applied to aquatic ecosystems - several experiences of landscape, forest, and neighbourhood contracts have also emerged; however, their discussion falls outside the scope of the present document.

<sup>17</sup> Some Wetland Contracts in Italy have been updated after their initial signing, without a new signing taking place, by simply updating the technical documents attached to the contract.



## 1.4 Other EU Countries

The EU countries in which at least one Wetland Contract has been signed are Croatia (3 cases), Portugal (1 case), Slovenia (1 case), and Spain (3 cases). In total, **8 initiatives** have been implemented across these countries. All of these projects were made possible through the support of European funding from Interreg programmes, which have financed collaborative governance tools for wetland management and facilitated the transfer and testing of the Wetland Contract methodology across multiple Member States.

In **Spain**, several initiatives supported by European Interreg programmes have applied contractual approaches to the management of rivers and wetlands. Under the Interreg IV B Sudoe programme, the Sud'Eau project implemented a River Contract for the *Matarraña* river in 2011. More recently, within the Interreg MED programme, the WetNet project facilitated the adoption of Wetland Contracts for the *Odiel* marshes and the *Albufera de Valencia*, both in 2019.

In **Portugal**, within the framework of the Interreg MED programme, the WetNet project enabled the implementation of a Wetland Contract for the *Melides* lagoon in 2019.

In **Slovenia**, within the framework of the Interreg MED programme, the WetNet project facilitated the implementation of a Wetland Contract for *Ljubljansko Barje* in 2019.

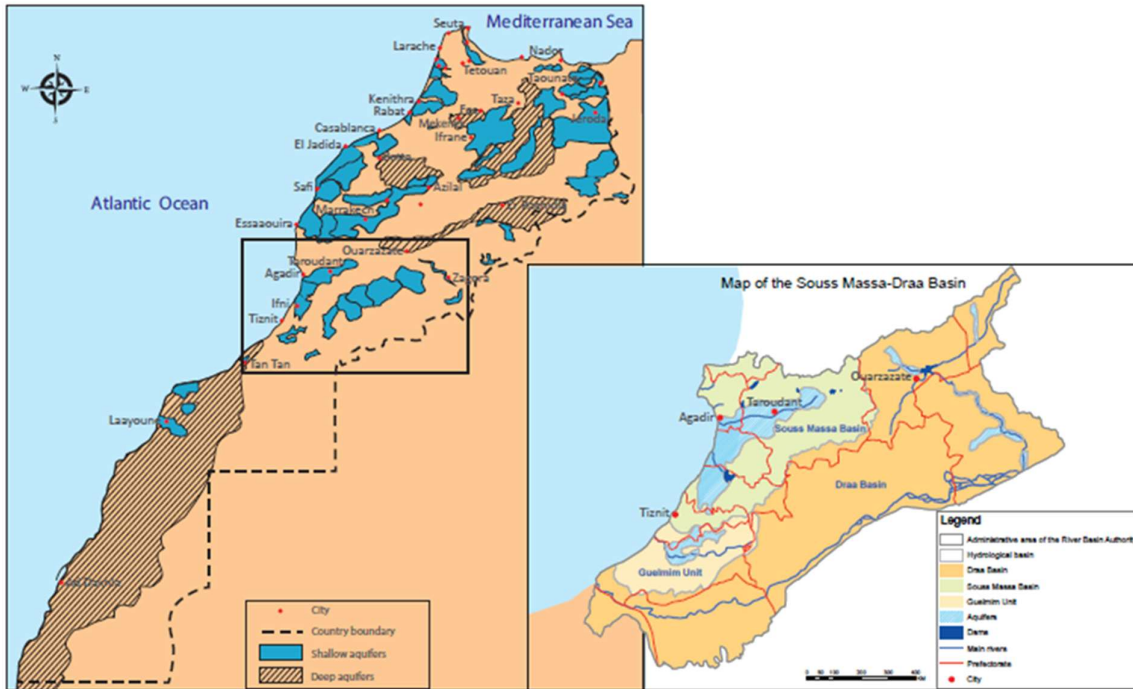
In **Croatia**, under the Interreg Italy-Croatia programme, the CREW project supported the implementation of Wetland Contracts for multiple sites in 2022, including the *Palud* wetland, the *Veliko* and *Malo* swamps, and the *Neretva* river delta.

## 1.5 MENA Countries

**Morocco** is among the first countries in the Mediterranean to have formally recognized Wetland Contracts within its regulatory framework, in 2015, alongside Italy.

This recognition occurred in the context of a series of Aquifer Contracts aimed at sustainable groundwater management.

Under this framework, four initiatives have been implemented and signed, including the *Souss Massa-Draa* Basin Aquifer Contract (2011), the *Saïss* Aquifer Contract (2015), the *Tadla* Aquifer Contract (2017), and the *Berrekid* Aquifer Contract (2019).



In **Lebanon**, the upper *Awali* River Contract has been signed in 2025 under the AsMed project, supported by funding from the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS). This Contract represents the first Wetland Contract not only in Lebanon, but also in the Levant, the entire Middle East, and the Asian continent.





## 2 EU funded projects on Wetland Contracts in the Med

### 2.1 General overview

The development of Wetland Contracts in the Mediterranean, beyond the pioneering experience in France, has been strongly supported by **European Union funding programmes**.

The first Italian Wetland Contract was established through the **NetWet 2** project, coordinated by the Center of Euro-Mediterranean Regions for the Environment (Greece) and implemented from 2003 to 2006 under the Interreg IIIB CADSES 2000-2006 programme. Starting in 2009, with the **Water in Core** project promoted under Interreg MED 2007-2013 and coordinated by Anatoliki S.A. (Greece), a continuous series of European projects began, supporting the dissemination, testing, and transfer of Wetland Contracts, a trend that continues to this day.

To date, **24 European projects** have contributed to the development, testing, and transfer of Wetland Contracts in the Mediterranean: 6 funded through the **LIFE programme** and 18 through **Interreg programmes**.

Project acronym	Co-funding Programme		Project duration																														
	Funder	Programme	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028					
<a href="#">NetWet 2</a>	EU	Interreg IIIB CADSES 2000-2006	X	X	X	X																											
<a href="#">WaterInCore</a>	EU	Interreg Med 2007-2013						X	X	X	X																						
<a href="#">Aquor</a>	EU	Lif+ 2007-2013								X	X	X	X	X																			
<a href="#">Su d'eau 2</a>	EU	Interreg IVB Sudoe									X	X	X																				
<a href="#">ERCIP</a>	EU	Interreg IVC									X	X	X																				
<a href="#">Rii</a>	EU	Lif+ 2007-2013									X	X	X	X	X																		
<a href="#">IT:CoCo</a>	EU	Interreg Italia-Francia "Alcotra" 2007-2013										X	X	X																			
<a href="#">Risorgive</a>	EU	Life 2014-2020											X	X	X	X	X																
<a href="#">WetNet</a>	EU	Interreg Med 2014-2020											X	X	X	X																	
<a href="#">Rewat</a>	EU	Life 2014-2020											X	X	X	X	X	X															
<a href="#">Retralags</a>	EU	Interreg Italia-Francia "Marittimo" 2014-2020											X	X	X	X																	
<a href="#">Proterina - 3Evolution</a>	EU	Interreg Italia-Francia "Marittimo" 2014-2020											X	X	X	X																	
<a href="#">Eau Concert 2</a>	EU	Interreg Italia-Francia "Alcotra" 2014-2020											X	X	X	X																	
<a href="#">Coasting</a>	EU	Interreg Med 2014-2020														X	X																
<a href="#">Crew</a>	EU	Interreg Italia-Croazia 2014-2020														X	X	X	X														
<a href="#">Nat.Sal.Mo.</a>	EU	Life 2014-2020														X	X	X	X	X													
<a href="#">Tune-Up</a>	EU	Interreg Med 2014-2020														X	X	X	X														
<a href="#">Ge.Ri.Ko.</a>	EU	Interreg Italia-Svizzera 2014-2020														X	X	X															
<a href="#">SmartRiver</a>	EU	Interreg Adrion 2014-2020															X	X	X	X													
<a href="#">Coasting+</a>	EU	Interreg Med 2014-2020																X	X														
<a href="#">WeGoCoop</a>	EU	Interreg EuroMed 2021-2027																							X	X							
<a href="#">Grew</a>	EU	Interreg Italia-Croazia 2021-2027																							X	X	X						
<a href="#">Svolta Blu</a>	EU	Life 2021-2027																							X	X	X	X	X				
<a href="#">Ricerca</a>	EU	Interreg Italia-Francia "Marittimo" 2021-2027																							X	X	X	X					

Project coordinators have always been public entities, including 14 from Italy, 4 from Greece, 3 from Spain, and 1 each from France, the United Kingdom, and Switzerland. Overall, **182 partners** have been involved (including Lead Partners, not considering Associated Partners), namely **158 public entities** and **28 private organizations**, with a total budget of approximately **€46 million**, averaging 8 partners and about €2 million per project.

Project acronym	Partnership				Budget	Pilot WCs	
	Lead partner			No. of partners (*)			
	Organization name	Organization country	Typology				
NetWet 2	Center of Euro-Mediterranean Regions for the Environment (KEPEMEP-MedRegio)	Greece	public	22	2.716.600,00 €	1	
WaterInCore	Anatoliki SA (***)	Greece	public	5	1.008.500,00 €	1	
Aquor	Vicenza Province	Italy	public	7	1.814.548,00 €	1	
Sud'eau 2	CRANA Foundation	Spain	public	6	1.395.420,00 €	1	
ERCIP	London Borough of Lewisham	UK	public	9	1.318.864,00 €	1	
Ril	Emilia-Romagna Region	Italy	public	1	1.199.250,00 €	1	
IT.CoCo	Polytechnic University of Turin	Italy	public	3	817.000,00 €	1	
Risorgive	Bressanvido Municipality (Vicenza, Italy)	Italy	public	4	1.161.293,00 €	1	
WetNet	Veneto Region	Italy	public	10	2.211.955,50 €	9	
Rewat	Toscana Costa Drainage Authority	Italy	public (****)	4	2.278.609,00 €	1	
Retralags	Alghero Municipality (Sassari, Italy)	Italy	public	8	2.689.344,11 €	3	
Proterina - 3Évolution	CIMA Foundation	Italy	private	14	6.053.800,96 €	2	
Eau Concert 2	Sindacato Misto Interdipartimentale di Gestione del Chirac	France	public	3	2.049.884,00 €	1	
Coasting	Andalusian Federation of Municipalities and Provinces	Spain	public (**)	9	975.522,50 €	8	
Crew	University IUAV of Venice	Italy	public	8	1.836.947,50 €	7	
Nat.Sal.Mo.	Molise University	Italy	public	9	2.630.833,00 €	2	
Tune-Up	Anatoliki SA (***)	Greece	public	12	3.215.378,50 €	11	
Ge.Ri.Ko.	Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research	Switzerland	public	9	2.030.782,22 €	1	
SmartRiver	Senigallia Municipality (Ancona, Italy)	Italy	public	7	1.293.470,25 €	1	
Coasting+	Andalusian Federation of Municipalities and Provinces	Spain	public	6	312.709,03 €	5	
WeGoCoop	Anatoliki SA (***)	Greece	public	7	999.784,00 €	5	
Grew	University IUAV of Venice	Italy	public	8	2.619.620,00 €	8	
Svolta Blu	Viacqua Water Company	Italy	private	6	2.025.510,00 €	1	
Ricrea	Provincia di Lucca	Italy	public	6	1.362.935,00 €	5	
				<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>46.018.560,57 €</b>	<b>78</b>
				<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1.917.440,02 €</b>	<b>3</b>

(\*) including lead partner  
(\*\*) association of public bodies  
(\*\*\*) development agency  
(\*\*\*\*) private organization (public functioning)

The distribution of project partners across European countries shows a clear concentration in **Italy**, which accounts for 90 entities (about 50% of the total amount), followed by **Greece** (24), **France** (20) and **Spain** (15). Other countries with notable numbers include **Croatia** (12) and **Romania** (7), while **Slovenia** (4), and several other countries - **Albania**, **Bosnia-Herzegovina**, and **Portugal** (3 each), **Germany** and **Malta** (2 each), and **Bulgaria**, **Cyprus**, **Montenegro**, **Switzerland**, and the **UK** (1 each) - host fewer entities.

These data highlight Italy's leading role, followed by Greece, France, and Spain, in internationalizing the practice of wetland contracts. This approach promotes the formation of **multinational partnerships** and effectively lays the groundwork for a Mediterranean Wetland Contract Community of Practice.



Thanks to these initiatives, **78 Wetland Contracts** have been promoted in the Mediterranean, averaging 3 pilots per project, many of which have already been signed or are in advanced stages approaching formalization.

## 2.2 Interreg programme

Within the framework of Interreg programs, **18 European projects** have been funded with a primary or secondary focus on Wetland Contracts. The table below provides hyperlinks to the official websites of the programs mentioned (where still active at the time of the reader's access).

Project acronym	EU funding programme
<a href="#">NetWet 2</a>	Interreg IIIB CADSES 2000-2006
<a href="#">Sud'eau 2</a>	Interreg IVB Sudoe 2007-2013
<a href="#">ERCIP</a>	Interreg IVC 2007-2013
<a href="#">SmartRiver</a>	Interreg Adrion 2014-2020
<a href="#">Crew</a>	Interreg Italy-Croatia 2014-2020
<a href="#">Grew</a>	Interreg Italy-Croatia 2021-2027
<a href="#">TT:CoCo</a>	Interreg Italy-France "Alcotra" 2007-2013
<a href="#">Eau Concert 2</a>	Interreg Italy-France "Alcotra" 2014-2020
<a href="#">Retralags</a>	Interreg Italy-France "Marittimo" 2014-2020
<a href="#">Proterina - 3Évolution</a>	
<a href="#">Ricerca</a>	Interreg Italy-France "Marittimo" 2021-2027
<a href="#">Ge.Ri.Ko.</a>	Interreg Italy-Switzerland 2014-2020
<a href="#">WaterInCore</a>	Interreg Med 2007-2013
<a href="#">WetNet</a>	Interreg Med 2014-2020
<a href="#">Coasting</a>	
<a href="#">Tune-Up</a>	
<a href="#">Coasting+</a>	
<a href="#">WeGoCoop</a>	Interreg EuroMed 2021-2027

One project was funded under the Interreg **IIIB CADSES** (2000-2006), **IVB SUDOE** (2007-2013), **IVC** (2007-2013), **ADRION** (2014-2020), and **Italy-Switzerland** (2014-2020) programs. Two projects were supported by the **Italy-Croatia** (2014-2020 and 2021-2027), Italy-France **ALCOTRA** (2007-2013 and 2014-2020), and **MARITTIMO** (2014-2020) programs. Six projects were funded under the **MED** (2007-2013 and 2014-2020) and **EuroMed** (2021-2027) programs.

Through the aforementioned Interreg programs, 71 of the 78 pilot Wetland Contracts (approximately 91%) were promoted in the Mediterranean, making this program the main driver and supporter of the consolidation and dissemination of this governance tool.



## 2.3 Life programme

Within the framework of LIFE programs, **6 European projects** have been funded with a primary or secondary focus on Wetland Contracts. The table below provides hyperlinks to the official websites of the programs mentioned (where still active at the time of the reader's access).

Project acronym	EU funding programme
<a href="#">Aquor</a>	Life+ 2007-2013
<a href="#">Rii</a>	
<a href="#">Risorgive</a>	Life 2014-2020
<a href="#">Rewat</a>	
<a href="#">Nat.Sal.Mo.</a>	
<a href="#">Svolta Blu</a>	Life 2021-2027

Two projects were funded under the **LIFE+** (2007-2013) program. Four projects were supported by the **LIFE** (2014-2020 and 2021-2027) program.

Through the aforementioned Interreg programs, 6 of the 78 pilot Wetland Contracts (approximately 9%) were promoted in the Mediterranean, highlighting the program's role as a contributor to the development and dissemination of this governance tool.

## 2.4 Other programmes

In addition to the essential support from European funding programs, two other donors are mentioned, who have also contributed to the dissemination of Wetland Contracts in the Mediterranean.

An Italian Wetland Contract, the **Coastal-Marine Wetlands Contract of the Oristano Area (Sardinia, Italy)**, was supported by the **MAVA Foundation**<sup>18</sup> (for the coastal component) within the framework of the **MARISTANIS project**<sup>19</sup>, and by the previously mentioned TuneUp project, funded under the Interreg Med 2014-2020 program, for the marine component.

The Wetland Contract of the **Upper Awali River Basin (Shouf, Lebanon)** was implemented thanks to the contribution of the **Italian Agency for Development Cooperation**<sup>20</sup> within the framework of the **AsMed project**<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> <https://mava-foundation.org/>

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.maristanis.org/index\\_php.html](https://www.maristanis.org/index_php.html)

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.aics.gov.it/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://comune.fontecchio.aq.it/novita/progtto-asmmed/>



Beyond the Mediterranean and the scope of this document, the **SMARIGO project**, co-financed by the **CEI Know-how Exchange Programme**<sup>22</sup> through the **CEI Fund at the EBRD**<sup>23</sup>, promoted the Wetland Contract model in **Moldova** (*Botna* and *Prut* river basins). Additionally, the **Interreg II** and **Interreg III** programs fostered cross-border cooperation between France and **Belgium** to promote Wetland Contracts in the **Wallonia region**<sup>24</sup> (from which the subsequent dissemination to the **Flanders region** also emerged<sup>25</sup>).

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.cei.int/KEP>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.cei.int/TechnicalCooperation>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.pa-contratsriviere.be/index.php>

<sup>25</sup> <https://riviercontract.be/>



## 3 Regulatory framework for Wetland Contracts in the Med

### 3.1 General overview

In the Mediterranean region, four countries have formally recognized Wetland Contracts within their regulatory frameworks, namely - in chronological order - **France** (1981), **Italy** and **Morocco** (2015), and **Spain** (2020).

France and Spain adopted **soft-law** approaches: France limited recognition to the use of ministerial circulars, while Spain referred to Wetland Contracts in the White Paper on Water Governance.

By contrast, Morocco and Italy simultaneously recognized Wetland Contracts in 2015 through **hard-law** instruments, both via national legislation addressing water and environmental matters, respectively. In Italy, the path leading to formal recognition was nevertheless preceded by soft-law instruments (most notably the National Charter of River Contracts) as well as hard-law measures at the river basin district level - namely River Basin Management Plans and Flood Risk Management Plans developed under Directives 2000/60/EC and 2007/60/EC - and at the level of administrative regions through regional legislation.

### 3.2 France

The history of **Environmental Contracts** in France has been defined through a series of ministerial circulars that progressively shaped their regulatory framework. Here below is a focus on the ministerial circulars mentioned above.

#### 1981 - Ministerial Circular on the Establishment of River Contracts

The Ministerial Circular No. D1453 of 5 February 1981 officially introduced the River Contract (*Contrats de Rivière*) in France, as voluntary agreements designed to promote integrated and participatory river basin management. Their purpose was to coordinate water management policies and encourage restoration and enhancement of river ecosystems through multi-level partnerships and concerted planning.

This Circular establishes the framework for River Contracts in France, designed to continue and expand the earlier “Clean Rivers” initiative. This initiative aimed to reduce river pollution and improve water quality through coordinated local cleanup efforts, infrastructure improvements, and management measures. The Circular emphasizes that successful river management projects depend on clear objectives, broad local consensus among residents, municipalities, and industries, and committed financial support, summarizing this as a fundamental requirement for effective implementation.

Furthermore, the Circular highlights the role of departments in river management. Departments develop “quality objective maps”, which are indicative tools used to



guide planning and regulatory actions. These maps outline the desired water quality standards for rivers but do not impose strict deadlines for achieving them. The Circular explicitly notes that River Contracts serve as a contractual instrument for implementing these objectives on specific rivers, allowing coordination without relying solely on rigid regulatory decrees, which are often too strict to be applied to many watercourses.

To support the conclusion of River Contracts, the Ministry of Environment provides additional funding of 10% to cover costs related to studies, land acquisition, pollution control, landscaping, bank protection, riverbed management, fisheries development, and aquatic habitat protection. The procedural steps include submitting a preliminary dossier by the prefect, consultation with the Committee for the Approval of River Contracts, preparation of a final dossier, and finally the signing of the contract. Each municipality or industry involved must express agreement to fulfill the obligations defined in the contract before it is finalized.

River Contracts have to be implemented considering: “[...] a clear definition of the objectives to be achieved, an overall agreement among residents, municipalities, and industries on these objectives, a commitment from financial decision-makers to provide the necessary funding so that the objectives are achieved within the established timeframe [...]”.

The Circular stresses that River Contracts aim to promote a rapid restoration of water quality and a sustainable enhancement of the river environment through collective local commitment. However, their implementation is not suitable for large rivers involving a very high number of stakeholders. Finally, the Circular advises that parties should verify departmental approval before engaging in the preparation of a contract, ensuring that the proposed river management project can be seriously considered.

### **1993 - Ministerial Circular on further development of River Contracts**

A second step came with Ministerial Circular n. 36 of 22 March 1993, following the adoption of the Water Law one year before (Law n. 92-3 of 3 January 1992). This text updated procedures and extended the scope to include Coast and Marine Contracts (*Contrats de Baie*) for coastal and marine areas. This circular was later abolished in favor of a more coherent framework.

### **1994 - Ministerial Circular on further development of River Contracts**

The following Ministerial Circular n. 81 of 24 October 1994, issued after the approval of the French Ten-Year Plan for the restoration and maintenance of rivers (24 January 1994), relaunched the instrument by encouraging wider dissemination and stronger integration with national programs for river rehabilitation. This circular too was later abolished.

### **2004 - Ministerial Circular on River and Bay Contracts**

The most recent and still valid reference is the Ministerial Circular n. 3 of 30 January 2004, which consolidated the role of *Contrats de Rivière* and *Contrats de Baie* as central tools in French water policy, aligning them with the EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC). It clarified objectives, approval procedures, funding



mechanisms, and monitoring requirements, while stressing consistency with river basin management plans (SDAGE and SAGE).

This Circular outlines that since 1981 over 150 contracts have been implemented or are under development, and that a 1999 audit confirmed their positive impact on integrated water and aquatic environment management, while noting weak coordination with other local policies such as SAGE (*Schéma d'Aménagement et de Gestion des Eaux*, a local water management and planning scheme), major planning projects, and ecosystem protection.

Following the cessation of the national approval committee in December 2003, the circular transfers responsibility for granting the “River Contract” or “Bay Contract” label to the basin committees, which examine applications, ensure coherence with water management schemes, and consult regional and departmental authorities. Approval follows a two-step process, with initial approval of the application file and subsequent approval of the finalized contract after elaboration.

River or bay committees are established by the prefect and serve as forums for debate among local stakeholders, including municipalities, professional groups, associations, users, state services, and water agencies, while ensuring balanced representation and coordination with SAGE procedures and, when relevant, foreign authorities for cross-border rivers.

The contract itself concerns objectives, resources, and alignment with the SDAGE, with financial commitments undertaken by the State, water agencies, local authorities, and other partners, and contracts are signed by the prefect on behalf of the State, including provisions for data sharing, monitoring, and evaluation. Financing for contracts approved before the end of 2003 continues under previous arrangements, while new contracts from 2004 onward involve water agencies funding specific studies and actions such as landscape surveys and inventories of aquatic environments, and the State supporting flood prevention, wetland protection.

**Overall, this evolution reflects the trajectory of Environmental Contracts from an experimental tool of local consultation in 1981 to a consolidated instrument of multi-level governance by 2004, capable of integrating national and EU policies and involving local communities in the sustainable management of river ecosystems.**

In recent years, a new contractual governance instrument has emerged in France – the **Territorial Contracts for Recovery and Ecological Transition** (*Contrats Territoriaux de Relance et de Transition Écologique* - CRTE) - which, while not replacing the practice of Environmental Contracts, has to some extent absorbed their functions within a broader framework of multi-objective negotiated planning. The history of the CRTEs in France reflects the progressive consolidation of this tool as a cornerstone for local ecological and socio-economic transition. Here below is a focus on the relevant ministerial circulars that are regulating CRTE in France.



## 2020 - Circular on the Development of “Contrats territoriaux de Relance et de Transition Écologique” (CRTE)

The Ministerial Circular n. 6231/SG of 20 November 2020 launched the elaboration of CRTE as a unified contractual framework designed to support territorial recovery after the COVID-19 crisis while embedding the principles of ecological transition. It aimed to simplify and integrate existing contractual tools, offering local authorities a flexible framework to coordinate investments, ecological objectives, and territorial projects.

This Circular regulates CRTE in France, establishing them as the primary framework for coordinating economic recovery and ecological transition projects across all types of territories, including urban, rural, metropolitan, and overseas areas.

It aims to simplify and unify existing contractual arrangements between the State and local authorities at the territorial level. CRTEs gradually integrate and unify multiple existing instruments, including thematic or local contracts, and complement rather than replace overarching frameworks such as *Contrats de Plan État-Région* (CPER) and *Contrats de Convergence et de Transformation* (CCT) for overseas territories. They also incorporate specific French programs (such as *Action cœur de ville*, *Petites villes de demain*, *France services*, *France Très Haut Débit*, *France mobilités*), and territorial climate-air-energy plans, ensuring coherence and streamlined access to State support for local projects.

It promotes immediate recovery by involving local actors such as collectivities, socio-economic stakeholders, associations, and citizens in the 2021-2022 recovery plan and fostering public and private investment. CRTEs are designed to support sustainable territorial development throughout the 2020-2026 municipal mandate and to ensure a coherent dialogue between State priorities and local projects. Funding from the State, local authorities, and partners is formalized within the CRTE, with ad hoc agreements possible for projects outside the contract timeline.

Ecological transition is a transversal axis of CRTEs, requiring territories to define a territorial project within six months of the circular that includes an action plan, resource efficiency, biodiversity preservation, and alignment with national climate objectives, while avoiding projects with high carbon or biodiversity impacts. Measurable indicators are used to track the achievement of objectives based on a shared diagnostic.

The territorial scope ranges from intercommunal to departmental levels, with intercommunal structures preferred. Stakeholder engagement includes civil society, associations, economic partners, and citizens, with all territories expected to have a CRTE signed or ready to sign by 30 June 2021.

Contracts are co-signed by the State representative and local elected officials, potentially including regional and departmental councils and relevant national or local operators. CRTEs are six-year contracts aligned with European funds and CPERs, referred to in rural areas as Rural Recovery and Ecological Transition Contracts.

The State provides consolidated financial support through Recovery Plan funds, ministry allocations, European funds, CPERs, and other sources, with reinforced allocations during the first two years, and offers engineering and project support through shared technical resources, including project managers, territorial assistance, project engineering and animation.



Overall, CRTEs serve as the central tool for State-local cooperation, integrating recovery funding, ecological transition strategies, and existing contractual frameworks into a coherent, measurable, and participatory territorial development approach.

### **2022 - Circular on the implementation of “Contrats territoriaux de Relance et de Transition Écologique” (CRTE)**

The subsequent Ministerial Circular n. 6322/SG of 4 January 2022 provided detailed guidelines for the implementation of CRTE, focusing on operationalization, monitoring, and coherence with national and European recovery plans. It emphasized the role of CRTE in structuring partnerships between the State and local authorities to ensure a green and resilient recovery.

This Circular reaffirms the integrating role of CRTEs, positioning them as the common contractual framework for the State's territorially differentiated public policies.

It mandates that each ministry appoint a CRTE referent to coordinate actions with the ANCT (*Agence nationale de cohésion des territoires*) and ensure that decentralized services (*services déconcentrés*) incorporate the CRTE perspective in their instructions. Furthermore, it strengthens coordination between the regional prefect and departmental prefect, especially regarding the alignment of CRTEs with CPERs (State-Region planning contracts).

The circular emphasizes the need to conclude remaining CRTEs in all departments, setting a deadline to finalize contracts by the end of January 2022.

The text clarifies financial modalities: the financial framework is indicative, not binding, and the CRTE does not serve as a precondition for all State investment subsidies (i.e. not all funding must pass through the CRTE).

The circular also formalizes requirements for monitoring and evaluation: local steering committees (*Comités locaux de cohésion territoriale*) must include periodic review of ecological transition indicators tied to the contract's goals.

Finally, the circular expands the operational clarity around CRTEs, notably by reinforcing the role of the ANCT (with support from the *Commissariat général au développement durable*) in overseeing implementation, and by consolidating the expectation that CRTEs will gradually incorporate existing territorial contracts and programs in a coordinated way.

### **2023 - Instruction on the Implementation of the territorialization of ecological planning**

A further evolution came with Ministerial Circular n. 6420/SG of 29 September 2023, which introduced the implementation of ecological planning territorialization, making CRTE the central vehicle for translating national ecological planning into local action. This reinforced the integration of climate, biodiversity, water, and energy objectives within the territorial contracts.

This Circular concerns the territorialization of ecological planning and strengthens the role of regional and local levels in implementing national ecological objectives.



It requires the organization of regional “Conferences of Parties” (COP *régionales*) from October 2023 onward, coordinated by the Prefect of the Region and the President of the Regional Council, engaging State services, local authorities, economic actors and civil society, in order to define shared strategies and levers of action aligned with greenhouse gas reduction and biodiversity goals.

The circular redefines the CRTEs (now called “*Contrats pour la réussite de la transition écologique*”) as the preferred instruments for implementing ecological planning at the territorial scale.

The CRTEs must be updated, endowed with reinforced governance, and include regular project reviews to ensure they remain aligned with the evolving regional ecological roadmaps.

The circular instructs that the COPs should be articulated with departmental, intercommunal and municipal levels, and the CRTEs must become the operational translation of commitments derived from the COP and regional roadmaps.

It also demands that CRTEs integrate ecological issues more fully (biodiversity, climate, resource management), and that the contractual frameworks adapt to ecological planning, rather than remain static.

The circular provides methodological and organizational elements (e.g. calendar, animation kits, governance modalities) to support deployment and calls for a rapid diffusion of these tools to the territories.

It also requires that ecological planning at regional level be cascaded down through the COPs and connected with local contracts and programs, ensuring coherence.

In sum: the 2023 circular shifts from CRTEs being primarily recovery/transition contracts toward making them central to territorial ecological planning, mandates updating them considering regional ecological roadmaps, strengthens governance and project review, and anchors CRTEs as the local instruments of the ecological plan.

### **2024 - Instruction on the relaunch of “*Contrats pour la Réussite de la Transition Écologique*” (CRTE)**

The most recent milestone is the Ministerial Instruction n. TRED2410587C of 30 April 2024, which relaunched the CRTE under the name of Contracts for the Success of the Ecological Transition (*Contrats pour la Réussite de la Transition Écologique*), reaffirming their strategic role as instruments for achieving the ecological transition. This instruction strengthened the link between CRTE and sectoral policies, clarified governance mechanisms, and enhanced their function as tools for mobilizing both public and private funding.

The *Contrats de relance et de transition écologique* (CRTE), now renamed “*Contrats pour la réussite de la transition écologique*”, are confirmed as a recognized and effective contractual tool across all territories. They become the main framework for implementing territorial ecological planning and reinforcing territorial cohesion policy, and this instruction sets out how to relaunch their use throughout France.

CRTEs must now serve as the standard contractual basis for relations between the State, municipalities, and intercommunalities, covering the entire scope of public



policy. They are designed to be continuously updated through project reviews, maintained as a “living portfolio” of local projects supported by the State. Their purpose is to organize public action around a territorial project, accelerate the ecological transition by translating regional objectives into local projects, and support local initiatives with funding and technical assistance. They also carry a strong interministerial and integrative dimension, enabling agreements with local elected representatives on ecological issues as well as economic development, public services, health, rurality, culture, social cohesion, and food. CRTEs are meant to serve as overarching umbrella contracts, ensuring coherence with existing local contractual arrangements and with territorial plans, while aligning where possible with departmental and regional frameworks.

Prefects are asked to relaunch CRTEs rapidly by organizing enlarged local committees of territorial cohesion to bring together all stakeholders, convening steering committees for each contract and appointing designated interlocutors for elected officials, conducting project reviews with mayors to identify and prioritize initiatives through 2026, and updating action plans to reflect regional ecological planning outcomes.

Updated contracts will be supported by State investment and financing from public operators including Water Agencies and others. They will also benefit from reinforced engineering support, and from innovative tools such as the “ecological transition compass,” which helps evaluate project impacts, and the digital platform [Mon espace collectivité](#) for project support and CRTE management.

All updated contracts, financial plans, and signed documents must be submitted to the national CRTE coordination unit at the ANCT by year-end, after which they will continue to evolve through regular steering committee reviews in agreement with local elected officials and partners.

**Overall, the trajectory of the CRTE framework from 2020 to 2024 illustrates its evolution from an emergency recovery instrument into a comprehensive and long-term governance tool to drive the ecological transition across French territories.**

### 3.3 Morocco

In Morocco, the regulatory reference for Wetland Contracts is provided by a national-level legal provision.

#### 2015 - Law 36/2015

Article 115 of the Moroccan Water Law (36/2015) states: “[...] *The Hydraulic Basin Agency may establish participatory management Contracts for aquifers, portions of aquifers, watercourses, stretches of watercourses, lakes or portions of lakes, or any other part of the public hydraulic domain, in mutual agreement with the partners and users of the water or public hydraulic domain concerned, with the aim of ensuring the sustainable use and preservation of water, the public hydraulic domain, and aquatic environments. This management contract sets, in particular, the action plan, its objectives, duration, financing arrangements, and*



*the rights and obligations of water users, the Hydraulic Basin Agency, the administration, and the various partners involved. It also establishes the rules and framework allowing water users to participate in the management and control of water use. The conditions and procedures for establishing the participatory management contract are determined by regulatory means. [...]"<sup>26</sup>.*

The following art. 116 add this: "[...] *The participatory management contract must comply with the prescriptions of the master plan for integrated water resources management and must be submitted to the opinion of the Hydraulic Basin Council prior to its approval. [...]"<sup>27</sup>.*

### 3.4 Italy

In Italy, at the national level, a broad range of strategies and legal provisions frame and regulate Wetland Contracts (with a primary focus on River Contracts but extending to other types of aquatic ecosystems).

#### 2015 - National Strategy for Climate Change Adaptation

In Annex 3, entitled 'Proposals for Action,' with specific reference to the section dedicated to non-structural or 'soft' measures and, in particular, to the 'water resources' sector, it is stated that "[...] *participatory forms of resource management should be encouraged, including River Contracts, Lake Contracts, and Aquifer Contracts* [...]"<sup>28</sup>. This reference is included both in the section listing short-term actions (to be implemented by 2020) and in the section listing long-term actions (to be implemented after 2020). River Contracts are also mentioned in the section dedicated to cross-sectoral actions (soft, green, or grey). In the part concerning Inland and Transitional Water Ecosystems – Water Resources, it is stated that "[...] *participatory forms of resource management should be encouraged, including River Contracts* [...]"<sup>29</sup>.

#### 2015 - Amendment of the Environmental Code (D.Lgs 152/2006)

Article 68bis, introduced in 2015 into the Environmental Code (Legislative Decree 152/2006), states: "[...] *River Contracts contribute to the definition and*

<sup>26</sup> Source text (in French): "[...] *L'agence de bassin hydraulique peut établir des contrats de gestion participative pour les nappes, portions de nappes, cours d'eau, tronçons de cours d'eau, lacs ou portions de lacs ou toute autre portion du domaine public hydraulique en commun accord avec les partenaires et les usagers de l'eau ou du domaine public hydraulique concernés en vue d'assurer l'utilisation durable et la préservation des eaux, du domaine public hydraulique et des milieux aquatiques. Ce contrat de gestion fixe, notamment, le plan d'action, ses objectifs, sa durée, les modalités de son financement, les droits et les obligations des usagers de l'eau, de l'agence de bassin hydraulique, de l'administration et des différents partenaires concernés. Il fixe, également, les règles et le cadre permettant aux usagers de l'eau de participer à la gestion et au contrôle de l'utilisation des eaux. Les conditions et modalités d'établissement du contrat de gestion participative sont fixées par voie réglementaire. [...]*".

<sup>27</sup> Source text (in French): "[...] *Le contrat de gestion participative doit respecter les prescriptions du plan directeur d'aménagement intégré des ressources en eau et être soumis à l'avis du conseil du bassin hydraulique avant son approbation. [...]*".

<sup>28</sup> Source text (in Italian): "[...] *favorire forme partecipative per la gestione delle risorse, includendo anche i "Contratti di Fiume", "Contratti di Lago" e "Contratti di falda" [...]*".

<sup>29</sup> Source text (in Italian): "[...] *favorire forme partecipative per la gestione delle risorse, includendo anche i "Contratti di Fiume" [...]*".



*implementation of district-level planning tools at the basin and sub-basin scale, as voluntary instruments of strategic and negotiated planning aimed at the protection and proper management of water resources and the enhancement of river territories, together with flood risk prevention, contributing to the local development of these areas [...]*<sup>30</sup>.

## 2018 - Establishment of the National Observatory on River Contracts

The 2018 Italian Ministerial Decree No. 77, issued on March 8 by the Ministry of the Environment, established the National Observatory of River Contracts to monitor, coordinate, and support the development of river contract initiatives across Italy. The instrument of the contract applies not only to rivers but also to other aquatic ecosystems, in line with the definition of wetlands provided by the Ramsar Convention. Its purpose is to connect regional and local experiences, provide a national reference point, and offer guidance for harmonizing these collaborative water management tools. The Observatory includes a Steering Committee, an Institutional Council, and a Technical-Operational Working Group, focusing on sharing best practices, developing guidelines, and supporting training and monitoring activities. The decree entered into force upon its publication in the Official Gazette and serves as a governance and coordination body rather than creating new regulatory obligations for river contracts.

## 2022 - Partnership Agreement Italy-EU

*"[...] Environmental protection initiatives based on participatory tools (such as River Contracts or other voluntary instruments) will also be promoted, as they are capable of engaging operators and local communities in the responsible management of natural resources. [...]"*<sup>31</sup>

## 2022 - Ecological Transition Plan

In Chapter A 1.6, dedicated to 'The Restoration and Strengthening of Biodiversity,' it is stated: *"[...] in the period 2025–2050, a widespread rehabilitation plan for Italian rivers and lakes must follow, through a strong central initiative complementing the competences of the regions, the Basin Authorities, local administrations, and the River Contracts [...]"*<sup>32</sup>.

## 2023 - National Strategy for Biodiversity 2030

Action B11.2 of the Strategy, entitled *"Restore freshwater ecosystems through the adoption of integrated measures that simultaneously contribute to achieving the*

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<sup>30</sup> Source text (in Italian): *"[...] I Contratti di Fiume concorrono alla definizione e all'attuazione degli strumenti di pianificazione di distretto a livello di bacino e sottobacino idrografico, quali strumenti volontari di programmazione strategica e negoziata che perseguono la tutela, la corretta gestione delle risorse idriche e la valorizzazione dei territori fluviali, unitamente alla salvaguardia dal rischio idraulico, contribuendo allo sviluppo locale di tali aree [...]"*.

<sup>31</sup> Source text (in Italian): *"[...] Saranno valorizzate, inoltre, le iniziative progettuali di tutela ambientale fondate su strumenti partecipativi (ad es. i Contratti di Fiume o altri strumenti volontari) in quanto in grado di responsabilizzare operatori e comunità locali nella corretta gestione delle risorse naturali [...]"*.

<sup>32</sup> Source text (in Italian): *"[...] nel periodo 2025-2050, dovrà far seguito un piano di riqualificazione diffusa dei corsi d'acqua e dei laghi italiani attraverso una forte iniziativa centrale a integrazione delle competenze regionali, delle Autorità di bacino, delle amministrazioni locali e dei Contratti di fiume [...]"*.



objectives of various EU and national policies”, refers to Sub-Action B11.2.a), described as follows: “[...] Promote restoration measures capable of contributing simultaneously and synergistically to the objectives of different directives (e.g. Nature Directives, Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC; Floods Directive 2007/60/EC), through interventions aimed at mitigating hydrogeological risk and supporting river restoration, also by means of instruments such as River Contracts [...]”<sup>33</sup>.

Among the “Biodiversity drivers”, understood as cross-cutting areas of action that facilitate, strengthen, and contribute to achieving the objectives of the Strategy, the item “Building a new society for biodiversity” is identified. This is further articulated into several components, including “Strengthening the implementation and enforcement of environmental legislation”, which in turn is broken down into various actions, among them: “[...] ensuring the full implementation of integrated river basin management policies that reconcile the objectives of the Water Framework, Floods, Habitats, Birds, and Marine Strategy Directives, giving priority to so-called win-win measures, also through the promotion of the River Contracts instrument [...]”<sup>34</sup>.

### 2023 - National Strategy for Sustainable Development

Objective 3 of the Strategy, entitled “Promote collaboration and support the creation of innovative partnerships”, is broken down into two “Trajectories”: 3.1, entitled “Promote co-design, co-planning, and the development of integrated and collaborative tools for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals”, and 3.2, entitled “Support the creation of innovative partnerships for sustainable development, involving businesses, research institutions, and public bodies, promoting research for innovation and ensuring the active engagement of new generations”. Among the operational tools to implement these trajectories, River Contracts are mentioned.

### 2025 - National Strategic Plan of CAP 2023-2027

Among the key choices guiding the Plan, “Diversity and attractiveness of rural areas, a heritage to be enhanced” is highlighted, with the following clarification: “[...] In addition to LEADER, the Plan provides territories with various intervention tools that, through cooperation, can foster territorial development (Food Districts, Bio-Districts, Smart Villages, River Contracts) and integration with the equally important Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI) [...]”<sup>35</sup>.

Among the “Needs” identified by the Plan, the need to “Implement plans and actions aimed at increasing resilience” is mentioned, within which it is recognized

<sup>33</sup> Source text (in Italian): “[...] Favorire interventi di ripristino che abbiano la capacità di contribuire simultaneamente e sinergicamente agli obiettivi di direttive diverse (es. direttive Natura, direttiva Acque 2000/60/CE; direttiva Alluvioni - 2007/60/CE) con interventi utili al contenimento del dissesto e alla riqualificazione fluviale, anche attraverso strumenti quali i Contratti di Fiume [...]”.

<sup>34</sup> Source text (in Italian): “[...] dare piena attuazione alle politiche di gestione integrata dei bacini idrografici che contemperino il raggiungimento degli obiettivi delle direttive quadro Acque, Alluvioni, Habitat, Uccelli e Strategia Marina, dando priorità alle c.d. misure win-win anche attraverso la promozione dell’istituto dei Contratti di Fiume [...]”.

<sup>35</sup> Source text (in Italian): “[...] Oltre che con il LEADER, il Piano offre ai territori diversi strumenti di intervento che attraverso la cooperazione possono favorire lo sviluppo dei territori (Distretti del cibo, biodistretti, smart village, contratti di fiume) e l’integrazione con l’altrettanto rilevante Strategia per le aree interne (SNAI) [...]”.



that “[...] *plans and actions, including collective ones (Agri-environmental Agreements, River Contracts, Bio-Districts, etc.), should be implemented to increase resilience, support adaptation to climate change, and enhance the provision of ecosystem services in the agricultural and forestry sectors [...]*”<sup>36</sup>.

Within the SWOT analysis related to Specific Objective SO5, entitled “*Promote sustainable development and efficient management of natural resources such as water, soil, and air, also through reducing chemical dependency*”, the opportunity O5.7 is mentioned: “[...] *Increasing spread across the territory of collective environmental actions (Agri-environmental Agreements, River Contracts, Bio-Districts, etc.) [...]*”<sup>37</sup>.

In the chapter on conditionality, with reference to the Plan’s green architecture, it is stated: “[...] *all initiatives that promote the aggregation of actors through territorial environmental agreements (Agri-environmental Agreements, Bio-Districts, Local Development Strategies, River Contracts, etc.) will be encouraged [...]*”<sup>38</sup>.

## 2023 - Water Action Agenda

The commitment aims to strengthen watershed governance in Italy through the River Contracts (RCs). These are voluntary, strategic, and negotiated planning tools that support the integrated management of water resources, flood risk reduction, and sustainable local development at catchment and sub-catchment scales. RCs integrate sectoral policies into a comprehensive and inclusive framework, reconciling environmental and social needs while fostering stronger relations between public administrations and citizens. They apply not only to rivers but also to lakes, coasts, aquifers, and lagoons, and are established as technical and financial agreements between public and private stakeholders. The approach involves progressive, multi-year investments to support both the decision-making process and the implementation of Action Programs, accompanied by monitoring and digitalization through a dedicated national platform. This commitment builds on an effort launched by the Ministry in 2018 with the establishment of a National Observatory on River Contracts and sets 2027 as its deadline.

The initiative is expected to disseminate and reinforce participatory processes, strengthen public-private partnerships, and increase the number of RCs across the country. Through participatory planning, these programs are contributing to the achievement of the SDGs at the local scale, including improving water quality and efficiency, fostering sustainable agricultural and production practices, reducing conflicts of use, and promoting integrated risk management. Wider impacts include reduced pollution and plastic influx into the Mediterranean Sea, strengthened resilience to climate change, conservation and restoration of ecosystems, more balanced urban-rural relations, and progress in inclusive governance, women’s empowerment, and equitable access to information.

<sup>36</sup> Source text (in Italian): “[...] *implementare piani e azioni, anche di natura collettiva (Accordi agroambientali, Contratti di Fiume, Biodistretti etc), volti ad aumentare la resilienza, a favorire l'adattamento ai cambiamenti climatici e a potenziare l'erogazione di servizi ecosistemici nel settore agricolo e forestale [...]*”.

<sup>37</sup> Source text (in Italian): “[...] *Crescente diffusione sul territorio di azioni ambientali collettive (Accordi agroambientali, Contratti di Fiume, Biodistretti etc) [...]*”.

<sup>38</sup> Source text (in Italian): “[...] *verranno promosse, inoltre, tutte quelle iniziative che favoriscono l'aggregazione di soggetti attraverso accordi di natura ambientale di natura territoriale (Accordi agroambientali, Distretti biologici, Strategie di sviluppo locale, Contratti di Fiume, ecc.) [...]*”.



The commitment is promoted by the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security and involves the seven River Basin District Authorities (Eastern Alps, Po River, Northern Apennine, Sardinia, Sicily, Central Apennine, and Southern Apennine), the 21 Regions and Autonomous Provinces, the Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA), and the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI).

### 2025 - Prosecution of the National Observatory on River Contracts

The National Observatory of River Contracts has been re-established and updated by the Ministerial Decree No.190 of 17 July 2025, which replaces the earlier 2018 decree as the current legal basis for the Observatory's operation at national level. This 2025 decree modernizes the institutional framework for the Observatory within the Ministry of Environment and Energy Security (MASE), reaffirming its role in monitoring, coordinating and supporting river contract processes across Italy, including their application to a broader set of water-related ecosystems in line with evolving environmental governance practices. The updated decree maintains the Observatory's core functions of connecting regional and local experiences, facilitating the sharing of best practices, providing guidance for integrated and participatory water management, and supporting capacity-building, while aligning the structure and activities with more recent institutional and administrative developments since 2018.

## 3.5 Spain

In Spain, the only national reference to Wetland Contracts (namely River Contracts) is of a soft-law nature.

### 2020 – White book on water governance

Among other measures, the Book proposes reforms aimed at promoting citizen co-responsibility in water management. Among the tools to support this objective, the River Contract is mentioned, described as follows.

*"[...] The River Contract is a management agreement among various public and private stakeholders with interests affecting a specific river area, aiming to reconcile the different uses and functions within the river, its immediate area of influence, and the entire watershed, with the goal of jointly restoring, protecting, enhancing, and promoting the riverine heritage. River Contracts are broad participatory processes, usually developed through collaboration agreements, involving a large number of actors and requiring a more complex organizational structure, formal and regulated meetings, the formation of working groups, etc. In France, it has served as a tool to improve the engagement of all users of a basin and of the public entities involved in water management and planning. In Spain, the pioneering case of the Matarraña River Contract stands out as a pilot project, which operated from 2010 to 2015. To develop the potential of River Contracts, the following is proposed: (a) carry out at least one pilot experience in each river basin over the next four years, to learn about the tool and refine its operation; (b) provide funding to existing initiatives and to new ones to ensure at least four years of operation; (c) secure a political commitment to prioritize measures unanimously agreed upon in the River Contract Assembly, within a defined scope of*



competences; (d) conduct a systematic study of results to incorporate them into the Water Law as a planning and monitoring instrument. [...]"<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> Source text (in Spanish): "[...] *El Contrato de río es un acuerdo de gestión entre diversos interlocutores públicos y privados con intereses que afectan a un determinado espacio fluvial para tratar de conciliar los diversos usos y funciones dentro del río, en su entorno inmediato de influencia y en la cuenca vertiente, y con la finalidad de recuperar, proteger, valorar y promover conjuntamente el patrimonio fluvial. Los contratos de río son procesos participativos amplios, que suelen desarrollarse a través de convenios de colaboración, implican a un elevado número de agentes y, requiere una estructura organizativa más compleja, reuniones formales y regladas, conformación de grupos de trabajo, etc. En Francia ha servido como herramienta para mejorar la implicación de todos los usuarios de una cuenca y de las entidades públicas vinculadas a la gestión y planificación del agua. En España destaca el caso pionero a modo de proyecto piloto del Contrato del Río Matarranya<sup>38</sup> que ha estado en funcionamiento desde 2010 hasta 2015. Para desarrollar el potencial de los contratos de río se propone: (a) realizar, al menos, una experiencia piloto en cada cuenca hidrográfica en los próximos cuatro años, para conocer la herramienta y perfeccionar su funcionamiento; (b) dotar de financiación a las iniciativas existentes y a las que se pongan en marcha para garantizar, al menos, cuatro años de funcionamiento; (c) adquirir el compromiso político de priorizar las medidas acordadas por unanimidad en la asamblea del contrato de río, dentro de un ámbito de competencias determinadas; (d) realizar un estudio sistemático de resultados para incorporar los dentro de la ley de aguas como instrumento de planificación y seguimiento. [...].*



## 4 Interest of the scientific community on Wetland Contracts

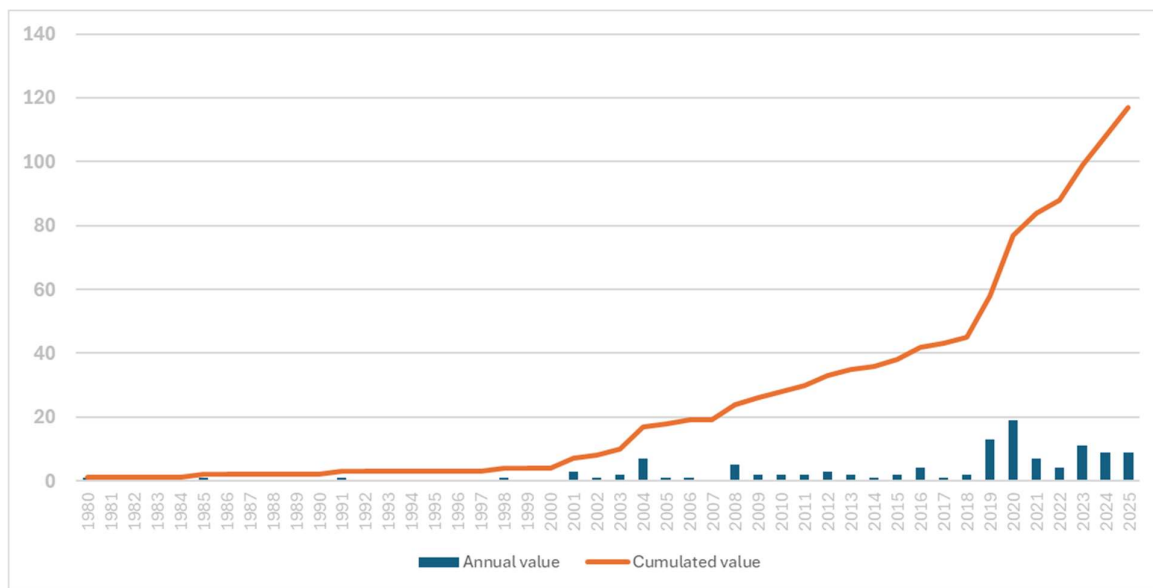
### 4.1 General overview

**Scientific interest** in Wetland Contracts is considered an indicator of the instrument’s innovation, dissemination, and credibility. Accordingly, this chapter presents the results of a **global literature review spanning 45 years (1981–2025)**. The review includes (a) scientific and technical papers, conference monographs and proceedings, and (b) books, manuals, and reports that explicitly refer to Wetland Contracts in their title and/or in the body of the text.

So far, a total of **117** scientific and technical papers<sup>40</sup>, and **38** conference monographs and proceedings, books, manuals, and reports addressing Wetland Contracts have been identified. All specific references to the identified materials are provided in the bibliography.

### 4.2 Papers

In this study, 117 scientific and technical papers were identified.



Analysing the temporal distribution of publication years, an initial period from 1981 to 1999 shows only 4 documents. This was followed by a first surge in

<sup>40</sup> Of the 117 papers identified, the full source was accessible for 115, while in 2 cases only the citation was available.



publications between 2000 and 2018, and a second, even more significant increase from 2019 onwards, which continues to the present.

In 2020, likely due to the publication of a monographic volume on Wetland Contracts and possibly the simultaneous pandemic period which boosted publication output, the highest number of documents was recorded (19 cases). Moreover, six of the last seven years have seen the highest annual publication records (ranging from 7 to 19 cases), confirming the recent intensification of interest in Wetland Contracts.

It should be noted that the analysis is likely not to be exhaustive, for the reasons outlined in the introduction. In particular, the exclusively digital search (without consulting physical library collections) may have resulted in the omission of additional documents published between the 1980s and the early 2000s, i.e. prior to the current era of near-total digital availability of scientific works.

In any case, despite all the approximations involved, the increasing interest of the international technical and scientific community in the Wetland Contract instrument is evident.

### 4.3 Conference monographs and papers, books, manuals and reports

In this study, **38** conference monographs and papers, books, manuals and reports were identified.

Typology	Number
conference monographs and papers	20
books	9
manuals	8
reports	1
<b>TOT</b>	<b>38</b>

All conference monographs and papers were published between 2004 and 2025, books between 2008 and 2025, manuals between 2001 and 2023, and the single report dates from 2025. The continued publication of books and manuals over the last 20 years reflects the ongoing need within the technical and scientific community to propose methods and methodologies supporting the implementation of Wetland Contracts, indicating that the debate on approaches for implementing this governance instrument remains open.



## 5 WeGoCoop case studies of Wetland Contracts

This chapter presents six Wetland Contract case studies in the Mediterranean, each referring to different contexts and at varying stages of implementation.

COUNTRY	TYOLOGY	NAME	STATUS
Albania	Wetland Contract	Nature park <b>Vjosa-Narta</b>	started (but not signed yet)
Croatia	Wetland Contract	Nature park <b>Vransko jezero</b>	signed
Greece	Delta Contract	<b>Axios</b> delta	started (but not signed yet)
Italy	River Contract	<b>Tiber</b> river	signed
Portugal	Wetland Contract	<b>Carvalhal</b> Wetland	started (but not signed yet)
Spain	Wetland Contract	<b>Odiel</b> marshes	signed

Overall, six different European countries, three types of aquatic ecosystems (coastal wetlands, rivers, and river deltas), and varying levels of governance implementation were considered. Half of the cases refer to signed Wetland Contracts, while the other half concern contracts still in the preparation phase.

For each case study, a summary sheet is presented. It first provides the identifying elements (Contract Typology, Wetland Name, Contract Status), followed by details on the organization coordinating the governance processes, the main characteristics of the wetland area, and the reasons that led to the activation of the Wetland Contract.

The sheet also reports activities carried out under the Wetland Contract up to the date of this document and those planned for the next period, a self-assessment of the governance process (for further details, see the comparative analysis presented in the last paragraph of this chapter), and a brief message highlighting the lessons learned from the experience so far.

The information provided in the case study sheets is not exhaustive with respect to the complexity and scope of the cases presented. Readers are encouraged to contact the reference persons indicated in each sheet for any further information or clarification.



## 5.1 Albania

<b>CONTRACT TYPOLOGY</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wetland <sup>41</sup> Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Lake Contract <input type="checkbox"/> River Contract	<input type="checkbox"/> Delta Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Bay Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Coast Contract	<input type="checkbox"/> Marine Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Aquifer Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Other
<b>WETLAND NAME</b>	Vjosa-Narta nature park		
<b>STATUS</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> started (but not signed yet)	<input type="checkbox"/> signed	

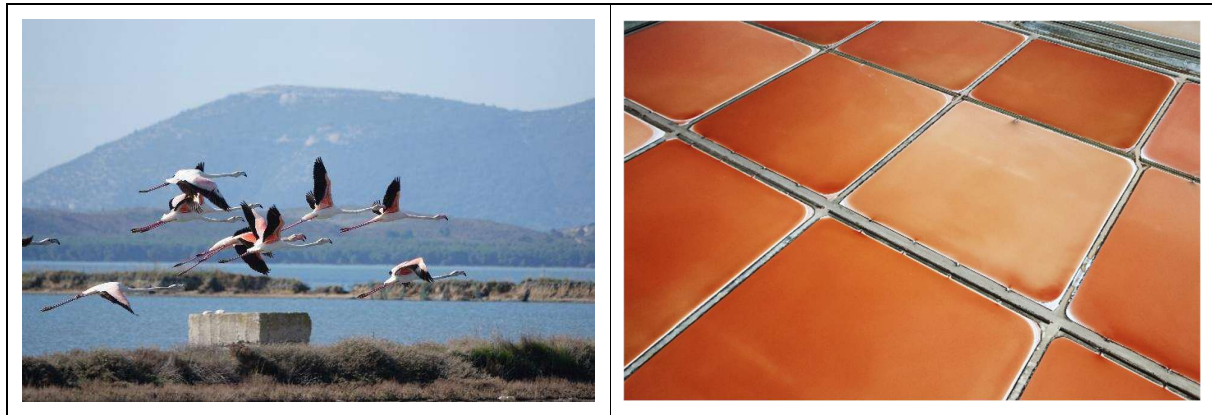


<b>REFERENCE ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>organization typology</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other	
	<b>organization name</b>	Protection and preservation of Natural Environment in Albania			
	<b>contact person</b>	<b>full name</b>	Xhemal Xherri		
		<b>role in the organization</b>	Project manager / Nature Conservation officer		
	<b>email</b>	<a href="mailto:xh.xherri@ppnea.org">xh.xherri@ppnea.org</a>			

<sup>41</sup> Transitional waters, lagoons, marshes, fens, peatlands, ricefields and other artificial wetlands.



<b>WETLAND FEATURES</b>	<b>wetland area [ha]</b>	16.125	<b>relevant area [ha]</b>	16.125
	<b>residents</b>	~ 30.000	<b>visitors (per year)</b>	~ 80.000
	<b>nature protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Protected Landscape (IUCN V)</li> <li>● Important Bird Area / Important Plant Area</li> <li>● Key Biodiversity Area</li> <li>● Emerald Site Candidate (future N2000)</li> </ul>		
	<b>main anthropic uses related to the wetland</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture (int.) <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture (ext.) <input type="checkbox"/> aquaculture <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bird watching <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ecotourism <input type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fishing <input type="checkbox"/> hunting <input type="checkbox"/> industry <input type="checkbox"/> mining <input type="checkbox"/> nature cons. <input type="checkbox"/> photography	<input type="checkbox"/> rice paddies <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> salt marshes <input type="checkbox"/> tourism <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> urbanization <input type="checkbox"/> water sports <input type="checkbox"/> other



<b>WHY A WETLAND CONTRACT ?</b>	<b>main issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Threatened from urbanization &amp; plans for an international airport being built within the protected area. As a consequence, it is threatened by pollution and development</li> <li>● Low environmental awareness</li> <li>● Lack of proper urban planning</li> <li>● Lack of initiatives and activities</li> </ul>
	<b>opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Extra efforts on wetland preservation.</li> <li>● Increased interest from local community to be engaged in initiatives.</li> <li>● Sustainable land management and rural development</li> <li>● Stakeholder collaboration and governance</li> </ul>

<b>WETLAND CONTRACT ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mapping and situation analysis / SWOT</li> <li>● Roadshow (4 events) events on wetland contract (12 different stakeholders)</li> <li>● Fieldtrip (birdwatching) event on Vjosa-Narta</li> <li>● Agreed a common strategy and signed a local protocol by relevant stakeholders</li> </ul>
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<b>WETLAND CONTRACT ACTIVITIES TO BE DONE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Establishment of a collaborative wetland management framework</li> <li>● Strengthened local governance capacity</li> <li>● Awareness raised</li> <li>● Early stakeholder engagement</li> <li>● Financial mechanism</li> </ul>
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		n/a	1	2	3	4	5
			(poor)				(excellent)
<b>WETLAND CONTRACT SELF ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>engaging stakeholder</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>sharing knowledge</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<b>understanding cause-effect relationships</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>setting a common vision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<b>identifying objectives and expected outcomes</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>evaluating alternatives of action</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>choosing win-win solutions</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<b>estimating financial needs</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>sharing responsibilities and commitment</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>granting financial support</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>implementing a communication strategy</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>monitoring the performance</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>LESSONS LEARNT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sustainable funding needed</li> <li>● Extra outdoor events to raise awareness on the importance of the area</li> <li>● Simple communication in meetings</li> <li>● Engage more stakeholders</li> </ul>
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## 5.2 Croatia

<b>CONTRACT TYPOLOGY</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wetland <sup>42</sup> Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Lake Contract <input type="checkbox"/> River Contract	<input type="checkbox"/> Delta Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Bay Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Coast Contract	<input type="checkbox"/> Marine Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Aquifer Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Other
<b>WETLAND NAME</b>	Nature park Vransko jezero		
<b>STATUS</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> started (but not signed yet)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> signed

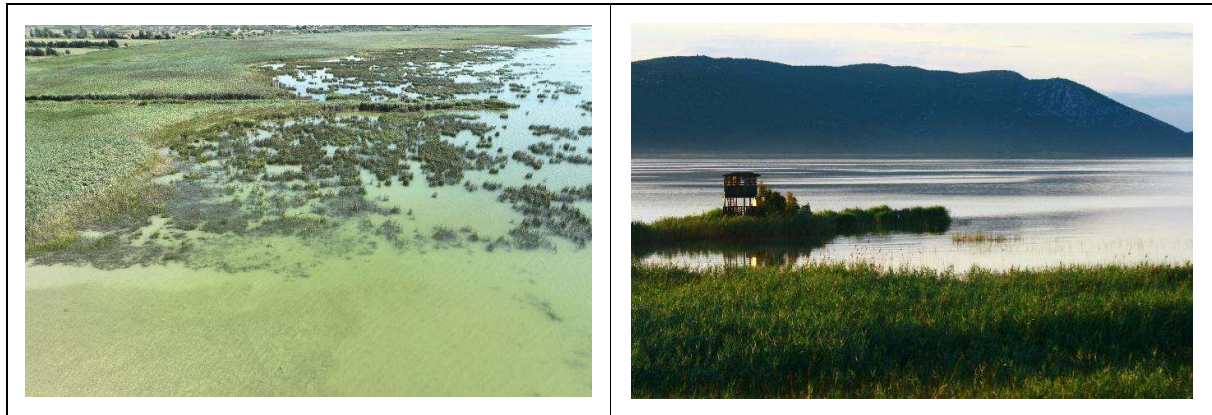


<b>REFERENCE ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>organization typology</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> other	
	<b>organization name</b>	Public institution Nature park Vransko jezero			
	<b>contact person</b>	<b>full name</b>	Maja Čuže Denona		
		<b>role in the organization</b>	Conservation manager		
<b>email</b>		<a href="mailto:maja.cuze.denona@pp-vransko-jezero.hr">maja.cuze.denona@pp-vransko-jezero.hr</a>			

<sup>42</sup> Transitional waters, lagoons, marshes, fens, peatlands, ricefields and other artificial wetlands.



<b>WETLAND FEATURES</b>	<b>wetland area [ha]</b>	~ 5.700	<b>relevant area [ha]</b>	~ 10.000
	<b>residents</b>	< 50	<b>visitors (per year)</b>	~ 60.000
	<b>nature protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natura 2000 (2 SPA &amp; 2 SAC sites)</li> <li>• Nature park (VIUCN)</li> <li>• Special ornithological reserve (IV IUCN)</li> <li>• IBA</li> <li>• Ramsar</li> </ul>		
	<b>main anthropic uses related to the wetland</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture (int.) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture (ext.) <input type="checkbox"/> aquaculture <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bird watching <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ecotourism <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fishing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> hunting <input type="checkbox"/> industry <input type="checkbox"/> mining <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> nature cons. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> photography	<input type="checkbox"/> rice paddies <input type="checkbox"/> salt marshes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> tourism <input type="checkbox"/> urbanization <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> water sports <input type="checkbox"/> other



<b>WHY A WETLAND CONTRACT?</b>	<b>main issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of cooperation, resource shortages, knowledge gaps, conflicting interests, weak legal obligations, bureaucracy</li> <li>• Unsustainable agricultural practices and water pollution</li> <li>• Climate change (droughts, lack of rainfall, extreme weather)</li> <li>• Tourism and urbanization due to disturbance, overcrowding and illegal construction</li> <li>• High biodiversity, ecosystem functions, recreation, aesthetics, and education</li> </ul>
	<b>opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience exchange</li> <li>• Improved cross-sector cooperation</li> <li>• Greater visibility</li> <li>• Community involvement</li> <li>• Development of “win-win” solutions</li> <li>• Project-based funding</li> </ul>

<b>WETLAND CONTRACT ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roadshow with stakeholders (4 sessions) – 13 different organizations</li> <li>• SWOT analysis, alternative scenarios, common vision and strategic objectives</li> <li>• defining actions organized in the two main themes: Conservation of wetland values and Visitation and education with priorities, responsible parties, indicators for implementation, and a timetable</li> <li>• Strategy for sustainable management of the Vransko Lake and its catchment</li> <li>• Stakeholders signed the local protocol</li> </ul>
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<b>WETLAND CONTRACT ACTIVITIES TO BE DONE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signing of the wetland contract</li> <li>• Implementation of planned activities</li> </ul>
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		n/a	1 (poor)	2	3	4	5 (excellent)
		<b>WETLAND CONTRACT SELF ASSESSMENT</b>	engaging stakeholder	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	sharing knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	understanding cause-effect relationships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	setting a common vision	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	identifying objectives and expected outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	evaluating alternatives of action	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	choosing win-win solutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	estimating financial needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	sharing responsibilities and commitment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	granting financial support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	implementing a communication strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	monitoring the performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>LESSONS LEARNT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make the process longer in order to build trust among stakeholders</li> <li>• Engage relevant and not just interested stakeholders</li> <li>• Raise awareness on the importance of joint management</li> <li>• Secure funding for the implementation</li> <li>• Use the right and clear terminology</li> <li>• Respect the signing hierarchy</li> </ul>
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## 1.1 Greece

<b>CONTRACT TYPOLOGY</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Wetland <sup>43</sup> Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Lake Contract <input type="checkbox"/> River Contract	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delta Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Bay Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Coast Contract	<input type="checkbox"/> Marine Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Aquifer Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Other
<b>WETLAND NAME</b>	Axios delta		
<b>STATUS</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> started (but not signed yet)		<input type="checkbox"/> signed



<b>REFERENCE ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>organization typology</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other	
	<b>organization name</b>	ANATOLIKI S.A. Local Development Organization			
	<b>contact person</b>	<b>full name</b>	Naya Tselepi		
		<b>role in the organization</b>	Project Manager		
<b>email</b>		<a href="mailto:naya.tselepi@anatoliki.gr">naya.tselepi@anatoliki.gr</a>			

<sup>43</sup> Transitional waters, lagoons, marshes, fens, peatlands, ricefields and other artificial wetlands.



<b>WETLAND FEATURES</b>	<b>wetland area [ha]</b>	~ 46.800	<b>relevant area [ha]</b>	~ 33.800
	<b>residents</b>	~ 5.900	<b>visitors (per year)</b>	~ 1.900
	<b>nature protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natura 2000</li> <li>• National Park</li> <li>• Ramsar Site (1974)</li> <li>• Important Bird Area</li> <li>• Wildlife refuge</li> </ul>		
	<b>main anthropic uses related to the wetland</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture (int.) <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture (ext.) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> aquaculture <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bird watching <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ecotourism <input type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fishing <input type="checkbox"/> hunting <input type="checkbox"/> industry <input type="checkbox"/> mining <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> nature cons. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> photography	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> rice paddies <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> salt marshes <input type="checkbox"/> tourism <input type="checkbox"/> urbanization <input type="checkbox"/> water sports <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other



<b>WHY A WETLAND CONTRACT ?</b>	<b>main issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of institutional framework</li> <li>• Fragmentation of responsibilities among competent authorities</li> <li>• Constant changes in the applicable legislation</li> <li>• Unsustainable exploitation of natural resources</li> <li>• Long-term pollution</li> <li>• Expected worsening of the climate crisis</li> </ul>
	<b>opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An integrated governance approach can lead to effective protection and consequently, to the revitalization of the marine protected area.</li> </ul>



<b>WETLAND CONTRACT ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT</b>	<p>TUNE UP (2020-2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local MoU for the Marine Protected Area Contract (14 local stakeholders) Main Goal: improvement of the quantity and quality of the waters of the Axios Delta Marine Protected Area (MPA).</li> <li>Regional Memorandum of Understanding (Region of Central Macedonia) Main Goal: activation of a process for the utilization of the Local Environmental Contract as a tool for the preservation of biodiversity, the provision of ecosystem services and the promotion of sustainable development.</li> </ul> <p>WE GO COOP (2024-2025)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting with NECCA &amp; Study visit</li> <li>Action Plan</li> <li>Participation in Thematic Seminar, Thessaloniki</li> <li>Meeting with Municipality, Symposium</li> </ul>
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<b>WETLAND CONTRACT ACTIVITIES TO BE DONE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuous information &amp; communication with the stakeholders involved, the Municipality and the NECCA.</li> </ul>
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<b>WETLAND CONTRACT SELF ASSESSMENT</b>		n/a	1 (poor)	2	3	4	5 (excellent)
		engaging stakeholder	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
sharing knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
understanding cause-effect relationships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
setting a common vision	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
identifying objectives and expected outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
evaluating alternatives of action	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
choosing win-win solutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
estimating financial needs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
sharing responsibilities and commitment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
granting financial support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
implementing a communication strategy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
monitoring the performance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



<b>LESSONS LEARNT</b>	<p>The Wetland Contract Procedures should be accompanied by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Involvement of the Ministry within the procedures.</li> <li>● Advocacy towards the creation of a single management body to provide guidelines, draw up an action plan, set priorities, and initiate consultation and participation procedures.</li> <li>● Continuous information, awareness raising and environmental education, especially for the local community and children/youngsters.</li> <li>● Actions towards sound and healthy tourism development in the area.</li> </ul>
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### 5.3 Italy

<b>CONTRACT TYPOLOGY</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Wetland <sup>44</sup> Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Lake Contract <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> River Contract	<input type="checkbox"/> Delta Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Bay Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Coast Contract	<input type="checkbox"/> Marine Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Aquifer Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Other
<b>WETLAND NAME</b>	Tiber river		
<b>STATUS</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> started (but not signed yet)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> signed



<b>REFERENCE ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>organization typology</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> other	
	<b>organization name</b>	Metropolitan City of Rome			
	<b>contact person</b>	<b>full name</b>	Romina D'Ascanio		
		<b>role in the organization</b>	Advisor		
<b>email</b>	<a href="mailto:contrattofiumetevere@cittametropolitanaroma.it">contrattofiumetevere@cittametropolitanaroma.it</a>				

<sup>44</sup> Transitional waters, lagoons, marshes, fens, peatlands, ricefields and other artificial wetlands.



<b>WETLAND FEATURES</b>	<b>wetland area [ha]</b>	~ 6.000		<b>relevant area [ha]</b>	~ 83.400
	<b>residents</b>	~ 3.000.000		<b>visitors (per year)</b>	n/a
	<b>nature protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N2000</li> <li>State Nature Reserve</li> <li>Regional Nature Reserve</li> </ul>			
	<b>main anthropic uses related to the wetland</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture (int.) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture (ext.) <input type="checkbox"/> aquaculture <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bird watching <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ecotourism <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fishing <input type="checkbox"/> hunting <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry <input type="checkbox"/> mining <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> nature cons. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> photography	<input type="checkbox"/> rice paddies <input type="checkbox"/> salt marshes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> tourism <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> urbanization <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> water sports <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other	



<b>WHY A WETLAND CONTRACT ?</b>	<b>main issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High flood risk and riverbank erosion affect several stretches of the Tiber River basin.</li> <li>Riparian ecosystems and wooded areas are partly degraded, abandoned, and poorly accessible.</li> <li>The Tiber is a complex hydrosystem with compromised water quality, mainly due to wastewater discharges.</li> <li>Improving water quality and wastewater treatment is a priority for Rome, in line with the EU Water Framework Directive.</li> <li>In central Rome, monitoring shows adequate ecological status and good chemical status, but water quality remains unsuitable for drinking and fish life.</li> </ul>
	<b>opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion of multifunctional river spaces for nature, recreation, and ecotourism.</li> <li>Enhancement of riverbanks and parks to support leisure, sports, and biodiversity-related activities.</li> <li>Improved urban-river integration through better access, reuse of disused areas, and green-blue infrastructure links.</li> <li>Strengthened connectivity and accessibility, including multimodal hubs and expanded walking and cycling networks.</li> <li>Development of integrated cultural, commercial, and recreational uses connected to surrounding urban areas.</li> <li>Introduction of innovative governance frameworks to address fragmented responsibilities and planning tools.</li> </ul>

<b>WETLAND CONTRACT ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• start of the process, promoted by Agenda Tevere Onlus (2017)</li> <li>• Memorandum of Understanding (2017)</li> <li>• Strategic Document (2018)</li> <li>• start of the development of the Action Plan (2019)</li> <li>• formal signing of the Contract (2020)</li> </ul> <p>From 2022 the Metropolitan City of Rome is in charge of Contract management (supported by Agenda Tevere Onlus until 2024) and the Action Plan is under implementation and monitoring. In 2025 a Technical Secretariat has been established within the Metropolitan City of Rome</p>
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<b>WETLAND CONTRACT ACTIVITIES TO BE DONE</b>	The Contract is in the final phases of implementation of its first three-years action plan. The construction of the next action plan is currently ongoing and expected to be finalised in 2026.
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		n/a	1 (poor)	2	3	4	5 (excellent)
<b>WETLAND CONTRACT SELF ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>engaging stakeholder</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>sharing knowledge</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>understanding cause-effect relationships</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<b>setting a common vision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>identifying objectives and expected outcomes</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>evaluating alternatives of action</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>choosing win-win solutions</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>estimating financial needs</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>sharing responsibilities and commitment</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>granting financial support</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>implementing a communication strategy</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>monitoring the performance</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>LESSONS LEARNT</b>	The Tiber River Contract (from Castel Giubileo to the mouth) serves as a unique collaborative “laboratory” in Rome’s river management, involving institutions, research centers, and stakeholders. It demonstrates the effectiveness of a participatory approach aimed at promoting concrete actions, guiding change, and restoring a sustainable relationship between the river and the city. However, awareness and adoption of this tool remain limited among public administrations, requiring greater commitment and dedicated funding to integrate it into existing administrative frameworks.
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## 5.4 Portugal

<b>CONTRACT TYPOLOGY</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wetland <sup>45</sup> Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Lake Contract <input type="checkbox"/> River Contract	<input type="checkbox"/> Delta Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Bay Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Coast Contract	<input type="checkbox"/> Marine Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Aquifer Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Other
<b>WETLAND NAME</b>	Carvalhal Wetland / Lagoas do Carvalhal		
<b>STATUS</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> started (but not signed yet)		<input type="checkbox"/> signed



<b>REFERENCE ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>organization typology</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> other	
	<b>organization name</b>	RCDI – Development and Innovation Network			
	<b>contact person</b>	<b>full name</b>	Alexandra Mendonça		
		<b>role in the organization</b>	Chairperson of the Board of Directors		
	<b>email</b>	<a href="mailto:alexandra.mendonca@rcdi.pt">alexandra.mendonca@rcdi.pt</a>			

<sup>45</sup> Transitional waters, lagoons, marshes, fens, peatlands, ricefields and other artificial wetlands.



<b>WETLAND FEATURES</b>	<b>wetland area [ha]</b>	~ 89	<b>relevant area [ha]</b>	~ 89
	<b>Residents (nr.)</b>	~ 264	<b>visitors (per year)</b>	~ 5,000 (maximum carrying capacity of nearby beaches)
	<b>nature protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature 2000</li> <li>• National Agricultural Reserve (NAR)</li> </ul>		
	<b>main anthropic uses related to the wetland</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture (int.) <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture (ext.) <input type="checkbox"/> aquaculture <input type="checkbox"/> bird watching <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ecotourism <input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> fishing <input type="checkbox"/> hunting <input type="checkbox"/> industry <input type="checkbox"/> mining <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> nature cons. <input type="checkbox"/> photography	<input type="checkbox"/> rice paddies <input type="checkbox"/> salt marshes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> tourism <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> urbanization <input type="checkbox"/> water sports <input type="checkbox"/> other



<b>WHY A WETLAND CONTRACT ?</b>	<b>main issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urbanization and tourism growth in the surrounding area, high demand for construction land, high ground-water consumption.</li> <li>• Reduction of surface water runoff in the drainage basin.</li> <li>• Seasonal demographic pressure.</li> <li>• Agricultural practices (drainage, sand deposits, fertilizers, etc.).</li> <li>• Abandonment and lack of land clearing, lack of control over the growth of invasive species.</li> <li>• Insufficient land use regulation and ineffective enforcement.</li> </ul>
	<b>opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To reestablish an appropriate water management system, combining ground and surface water management, to maintain the water levels that are necessary to avoid further deterioration of the habitats.</li> <li>• To slow down urban-tourism growth in the surrounding area.</li> <li>• To ensure the best environmental farming practices.</li> <li>• To control the growth of exotic species.</li> <li>• To enforce a more rigorous and effective land use regulation.</li> </ul>



<b>WETLAND CONTRACT ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder mapping.</li> <li>• Preliminary context analysis.</li> <li>• Four participative working sessions carried out from February to July 2025: 3.i) Presentation of the We Go Coop project and the concepts associated with Wetland Contracts.; 3.ii) Context and SWOT analysis; 3.iii) Planning discussions to outline the strategy for the sustainable management of the Wetland; 3.iv) Validation of the Strategy and the Protocol.</li> <li>• Final formulation of the Strategy for sustainable management of the wetland.</li> <li>• Preparation and signature of the Local Protocol.</li> </ul>
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<b>WETLAND CONTRACT ACTIVITIES TO BE DONE</b>	<p>The public stakeholders are motivated to accomplish the main goals defined in the Strategy and will collaborate in its implementation, based on the means available to them and according to their respective attributions and competences. Further activities to be done include: i) Outlining of a detailed Action Plan, including the estimation of financial resources required; ii) Definition of a governance model for the implementation of the Wetland Contract; iii) Identification of possible financing sources for the accomplishment of the Action Plan; iv) Final revision, approval and signature of the Wetland Contract by the public and private stakeholders.</p>
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<b>WETLAND CONTRACT SELF ASSESSMENT</b>		n/a	1 (poor)	2	3	4	5 (excellent)
	<b>engaging stakeholder</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>sharing knowledge</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>understanding cause-effect relationships</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>setting a common vision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>identifying objectives and expected outcomes</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>evaluating alternatives of action</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>choosing win-win solutions</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>estimating financial needs</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>sharing responsibilities and commitment</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>granting financial support</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>implementing a communication strategy</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>monitoring the performance</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>LESSONS LEARNT</b>	Particular attention must be paid to the analysis of the specific conditions of private stakeholders and to possible conflicts of interest, to minimise constraints.
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## 5.5 Spain

<b>CONTRACT TYPOLOGY</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wetland <sup>46</sup> Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Lake Contract <input type="checkbox"/> River Contract	<input type="checkbox"/> Delta Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Bay Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Coast Contract	<input type="checkbox"/> Marine Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Aquifer Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Other
<b>WETLAND NAME</b>	Odiel marshes		
<b>STATUS</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> started (but not signed yet)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> signed	



<sup>46</sup> Transitional waters, lagoons, marshes, fens, peatlands, ricefields and other artificial wetlands.



REFERENCE ORGANIZATION	organization typology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> other	
	organization name	Delegación Territorial Sostenibilidad, Medio Ambiente y Economía Azul en Huelva			
	contact person	full name	Enrique Martínez Montes		
		role in the organization	Former director of the Marismas del Odiel		
email		<a href="mailto:enrique.martinez.montes@juntadeandalucia.es">enrique.martinez.montes@juntadeandalucia.es</a>			

WETLAND FEATURES	wetland area [ha]	~ 7.100	relevant area [ha]	~ 18.900
	residents	~ 36.500	visitors (per year)	~ 20.000
	nature protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biosphere Reserve UNESCO (1983)</li> <li>• Ramsar Site (1989)</li> <li>• Special Protection Area for Birds (ZEPA) (1987) (Nature 2000)</li> <li>• Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (2025)</li> <li>• IBA</li> </ul>		
	main anthropic uses related to the wetland	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture (int.) <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture (ext.) <input type="checkbox"/> aquaculture <input type="checkbox"/> bird watching <input type="checkbox"/> ecotourism <input type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fishing <input type="checkbox"/> hunting <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> mining <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> nature cons. <input type="checkbox"/> photography	<input type="checkbox"/> rice paddies <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> salt marshes <input type="checkbox"/> tourism <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> urbanization <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> water sports <input type="checkbox"/> other





<b>WHY A WETLAND CONTRACT ?</b>	<b>main issues</b>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Traditional Governance Challenges</li> <li>● Overrepresentation of administrations and political actors</li> <li>● Minimal civil society and scientific participation</li> <li>● In some situations companies use governance for greenwashing</li> </ul> <p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Complex ecological, cultural, socio-economic interactions</li> </ul>
	<b>opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Voluntary commitments and collaborative action plans</li> <li>● Transparent and adaptive governance</li> <li>● Multi-stakeholder engagement: municipalities, NGOs, companies, universities...</li> <li>● Preventive measures required</li> </ul>

<b>WETLAND CONTRACT ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Participatory process and action plan follow up</li> <li>● Cultural and archaeological heritage enhancement</li> <li>● Spillover effects and scientific innovation</li> <li>● Citizen engagement programs and active participation in management</li> <li>● Habitat restoration and litter removal</li> </ul>
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<b>WETLAND CONTRACT ACTIVITIES TO BE DONE</b>	The activities were related to communication, awareness raising and training, to management and governance or more concrete actions included in the Wetland Contract and Action Plan.
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		n/a	1 (poor)	2	3	4	5 (excellent)
		<b>WETLAND CONTRACT SELF ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>engaging stakeholder</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<b>sharing knowledge</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>understanding cause-effect relationships</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>setting a common vision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>identifying objectives and expected outcomes</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<b>evaluating alternatives of action</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>choosing win-win solutions</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>estimating financial needs</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>sharing responsibilities and commitment</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>granting financial support</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>implementing a communication strategy</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>monitoring the performance</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



<b>LESSONS LEARNT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Improved governance and stakeholder collaboration</li> <li>● Exposure of environmental pressures</li> <li>● Increase scientific, cultural, and educational initiatives</li> <li>● Ideas of Preventive and adaptive management of wetlands</li> <li>● Problems with the implementation of the Action Plan projects and with the signing or approval by the Public Administration of the regional government</li> <li>● Inclusive, representative participation is essential</li> <li>● Municipalities as local leaders</li> <li>● Integrate heritage and science into conservation</li> <li>● Preventive measures for agriculture-driven pressures</li> <li>● Transparency is crucial for accountability</li> <li>● Replicable model for other wetlands/rivers</li> </ul>
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## 5.6 Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis of the six Wetland Contract case studies was carried out with the aim of providing a synthetic overview that can help to clarify the role these governance processes can play in supporting the integrated, participatory, and sustainable management of wetland areas. To this end, twelve criteria were identified, covering all phases of a Wetland Contract, from initial activation to the implementation of commitments.

engaging stakeholder	<b>A</b>
sharing knowledge	<b>B</b>
understanding cause-effect relationships	<b>C</b>
setting a common vision	<b>D</b>
identifying objectives and expected outcomes	<b>E</b>
evaluating alternatives of action	<b>F</b>
choosing win-win solutions	<b>G</b>
estimating financial needs	<b>H</b>
sharing responsibilities and commitment	<b>I</b>
granting financial support	<b>J</b>
implementing a communication strategy	<b>K</b>
monitoring the performance	<b>L</b>

The proposed criteria are not intended to be exhaustive of all aspects describing the progress of a Wetland Contract. Their purpose is solely to provide an overview of key elements that help to understand how the process functions. For each criterion, assessors were required to select a single assessment value. Where information was not available, the criterion was recorded as n/a (not available). In all other cases, criteria were scored using a five-point ranking scale, ranging from 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent). The tables below summarize the self-assessment results for each of the six Wetland Contract case studies.



	n/a	1 (poor)	2	3	4	5 (excellent)
A					X	
B						X
C					X	
D						X
E					X	
F					X	
G						X
H					X	
I				X		
J			X			
K					X	
L					X	
	0	0	1	1	7	3

**ALBANIA**

	n/a	1 (poor)	2	3	4	5 (excellent)
A				X		
B				X		
C					X	
D					X	
E					X	
F					X	
G				X		
H			X			
I		X				
J				X		
K		X				
L		X				
	0	3	1	4	4	0

**CROATIA**

	n/a	1 (poor)	2	3	4	5 (excellent)
A				X		
B					X	
C					X	
D				X		
E				X		
F	X					
G				X		
H	X					
I			X			
J	X					
K	X					
L	X					
	5	0	1	4	2	0

**GREECE**

	n/a	1 (poor)	2	3	4	5 (excellent)
A					X	
B					X	
C						X
D				X		
E					X	
F			X			
G			X			
H					X	
I			X			
J		X				
K				X		
L				X		
	0	1	3	3	4	1

**ITALY**

	n/a	1 (poor)	2	3	4	5 (excellent)
A					X	
B					X	
C					X	
D					X	
E					X	
F					X	
G					X	
H			X			
I			X			
J		X				
K			X			
L			X			
	0	1	4	0	7	0

**PORTUGAL**

	n/a	1 (poor)	2	3	4	5 (excellent)
A				X		
B					X	
C					X	
D					X	
E						X
F					X	
G				X		
H	X					
I					X	
J	X					
K					X	
L	X					
	3	0	0	2	6	1

**SPAIN**



A comparative analysis was conducted on the self-assessment results of the six Wetland Contract case studies. For each evaluation criterion, the analysis calculated how many times each score was assigned across the case studies. Based on these distributions, a cumulative assessment was then carried out in order to identify overall trends and comparative performance among the cases.

CRITERIA		n/a	1 (poor)	2	3	4	5 (excellent)
<b>A</b>	engaging stakeholder	0	0	0	3	3	0
<b>B</b>	sharing knowledge	0	0	0	1	4	1
<b>C</b>	understanding cause-effect relationships	0	0	0	0	5	1
<b>D</b>	setting a common vision	0	0	0	2	3	1
<b>E</b>	identifying objectives and expected outcomes	0	0	0	1	4	1
<b>F</b>	evaluating alternatives of action	1	0	1	0	4	0
<b>G</b>	choosing win-win solutions	0	0	1	3	1	1
<b>H</b>	estimating financial needs	2	0	2	0	2	0
<b>I</b>	sharing responsibilities and commitment	0	1	3	1	1	0
<b>J</b>	granting financial support	2	2	1	1	0	0
<b>K</b>	implementing a communication strategy	1	1	1	1	2	0
<b>L</b>	monitoring the performance	2	1	1	1	1	0
		<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>5</b>

All case studies were positively assessed (with a score of at least 3 out of 5) for the first five criteria - engaging stakeholders, sharing knowledge, understanding cause-effect relationships, setting a common vision, and identifying objectives and expected outcomes. This result demonstrates the advanced preparatory work carried out prior to the identification of shared actions and commitments, as well as the establishment of an appropriate governance framework to support their implementation.

It is worth noting that the first criterion (A - engaging stakeholders), although assessed for all case studies, shows only a medium-to-good level of performance. This highlights the inherent complexity of participatory processes, even when they are formally structured within a governance framework such as that of Wetland Contracts.



The medium-to-high performance observed for the third criterion (C - understanding cause-effect relationships) is far from trivial, as this aspect is often underestimated in decision-making processes or addressed only through broad, high-level assessments. In this case, it provides a solid foundation for Wetland Contract action plans that are coherent with the challenges addressed and the needs of local communities.

The results for the seventh criterion (G - choosing win-win solutions) are more scattered, confirming that the ability to develop creative negotiation processes within Wetland Contracts remains challenging. This reflects the ongoing difficulty in building robust, widely shared agreements capable of addressing territorial issues in a truly integrated manner.

The remaining criteria show a lower level of performance, which is consistent with the fact that the different case studies are at different stages of implementation. Consequently, the more advanced phases associated with these criteria have not yet been activated in several cases or are still under development.

In any case, only a limited number of self-assessments were not carried out (i.e. scored as N/A), indicating both the capacity of the responsible stakeholders to perform the evaluation and the fact that all the case studies considered have reached a level of development that is not merely embryonic.

**It should be noted that this comparative analysis is secondary to the detailed information provided by each case study. Its purpose is to support benchmarking with other Mediterranean experiences, promote the replicability and transferability of past initiatives, capitalize on lessons learned, and understand the limitations of previous experiences.**

Furthermore, the proposed analytical model can be effectively replicated in additional cases, with the aim of expanding the comparative analysis.



## 6 Final remarks and recommendations

The development of Wetland Contracts in the Mediterranean over the past 45 years (1981–2025) has been highly significant in terms of the agreements signed, the countries and organizations involved, the types of wetlands concerned, the financial and human resources mobilized to support the processes, and the research and studies produced. The insights presented in this document clearly show that, after an initial embryonic phase that by the end of the second millennium involved only France, and a subsequent replication in Italy at the beginning of the third millennium, the Mediterranean today is witnessing growing interest and numerous Wetland Contract experiences. This expansion of collaborative governance occurs against a backdrop of ongoing wetland degradation and mounting pressures: more than 56 % of historical natural wetlands in the Mediterranean have already been lost, with further declines driven by land conversion, agricultural intensification, water abstraction, urban expansion, and climate change, all of which weaken ecological functions and ecosystem services vital to both biodiversity and human well-being (Mediterranean Wetlands Outlook 3, 2025).

For some countries, the process is at a stage of consolidation (Italy) or evolution (France), while for others a full-scale take-off of Wetland Contract experiences can be anticipated (Croatia, Morocco, and Spain). In all cases, efforts must focus on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of Wetland Contract models, capitalizing on the substantial wealth of past experiences, and identifying the most appropriate ways to make the best use of these governance tools.

In several other countries, Wetland Contract experiences are still in their infancy, and in many others they have yet to emerge, highlighting the need to continue investing in projects for knowledge and skills transfer, especially in the MENA region.

The analysis presented in this work is predominantly quantitative and must be complemented by further qualitative investigation. Areas for future research and investigation include:

**Why do some Wetland Contracts fail to reach formal signing?**

**What happens to the commitments made in a Wetland Contract after it is signed?**

**How do Wetland Contracts contribute to improving the management of Mediterranean wetlands and the quality of life of the communities connected to them?**



## **How do Wetland Contracts interact with other governance instruments affecting Mediterranean wetlands (e.g., stewardship agreements, co-management processes in marine protected areas, etc.)?**

These are just some of the open issues raised by this document, which aims to provide a solid foundation on which further knowledge pathways can be built and to stimulate the continuous improvement of wetland governance, including through the practical application of Wetland Contracts.

We can state with reasonable certainty that, given the severe environmental and socio-economic imbalances affecting Mediterranean wetlands (MWO, 2025), Wetland Contracts represent a useful tool in the range of approaches available to protect wetlands. Given the level of interest and future opportunities for this tool to be adopted around the Mediterranean, a Wetland Contracts Community of Practice represents a highly relevant opportunity for this region.

Wetland Contracts have proven to be a flexible and participatory tool for wetland governance in the Mediterranean, contributing to the sustainable management of aquatic ecosystems while fostering collaboration among multiple stakeholders. The insights presented in this report provide a comprehensive overview of their evolution, implementation, and scientific engagement over the past 45 years, highlighting both achievements and challenges.

It is recommended that the Community of Practice (CoP) on Wetland Contracts in the Mediterranean continue to update and deepen the knowledge base provided by this report, enabling policymakers, local authorities, and community stakeholders to remain fully informed about the characteristics, trends, and developments of this governance practice across the region.

Further research, capacity-building, and targeted EU-funded projects are essential to strengthen existing initiatives, expand the adoption of Wetland Contracts, and ensure their replicability and adaptability to diverse ecological, social, and institutional contexts.

By combining knowledge-sharing, training, and continued financial and technical support, the Mediterranean can consolidate Wetland Contracts as a core instrument for ecosystem protection, sustainable development, and the preservation of valuable wetland services for both nature and society.



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## 11.2 Web references

### Database on Wetland Contracts

URL	Last consultation
<a href="#">Gesteau Portal – National platform on River Basin Management</a> (France)	19/12/2025
<a href="#">Platform of industrial Ecological Transition Contracts</a> (France)	19/12/2025
<a href="#">Geospatial Library of the National Agency for Territorial Cohesion</a> (France)	19/12/2025
<a href="#">National Platform on River Contracts</a> (Italy)	19/12/2025
<a href="#">CREW Wetland Observatory</a> (Italy and Croatia)	19/12/2025
<a href="#">WEGOCOOP Collaborative Platform</a> (Mediterranean)	19/12/2025
<a href="#">River Contract platform for Wallonne</a> (Belgium)	19/12/2025
<a href="#">River Contract platform for Flanders</a> (Belgium)	19/12/2025

### National regulatory frameworks acknowledging Wetland Contracts

France	<a href="#">Circulaire ministérielle relative à la création des Contrats de Rivière</a> - n. D1453 du 5 février 1981
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	<a href="#">Circulaire relative à la mise en œuvre de la territorialisation de la pianification écologique</a> - n. 6420/SG du 29 septembre 2023
	<a href="#">Instruction relative à la relance des Contrats pour la Réussite de la Transition Écologique (CRTE)</a> - n. TRED2410587C du 30 avril 2024



Italy	<p><a href="#">Strategia Nazionale adattamento Cambiamenti Climatici</a> - appr. con Decreto Direttoriale CLE del 16 giugno 2015, n. 86</p>
	<p><a href="#">Decreto Legislativo del 3 aprile 2006, n. 152</a> - mod. con Legge del 28 dicembre 2015, n. 221</p>
	<p><a href="#">Accordo di Partenariato Italia-UE 2021-2027</a> - appr. con Dec. Es. del 15 luglio 2022, C(2022) 4787 final</p>
	<p><a href="#">Piano Strategico Nazionale (PSN) della PAC 2021-2027</a> - appr. con Dec. Es. del 2 dicembre 2022, C(2022) 8645 final - mod. Con Dec. Es. del 18 giugno 2025, C(2025) 3805 final</p>
	<p><a href="#">Piano per la Transizione Ecologica</a> - appr. con Del. CITE del 8 marzo 2022</p>
	<p><a href="#">Strategia Nazionale per la Biodiversità al 2030</a> - appr. con DM del 3 agosto 2023, n. 252</p>
	<p><a href="#">Strategia Nazionale per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile</a> - appr. con Del. CITE del 18 settembre 2023</p>
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Spain	<p><a href="#">Libro Verde de la Gobernanza del Agua en España</a> - 22 marzo 2020</p>
Morocco	<p><a href="#">Loi 36/2015 relative à l’eau</a> - mod. Bulletin Officiel n° 7318 du 12 moharrem 1446 (18 juillet 2024)</p>
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