



20th Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD)

Marseille, France, 14-16 June 2023

Working Paper: Outcome of the MED 2050 Foresight Study

Note by the Secretariat

The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention have tasked Plan Bleu with the MED 2050 Foresight study, through Decision IG.24/4 adopted at COP 21 and by Activity 6.1.1 of the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work and Budget for 2022-2023. This report recalls the methodology followed for the Med2050 study and includes a pitch of each of the six scenarios and a supporting table. The scenarios will be detailed during the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (MCSD) meeting by the co-chairs of the MCSD Steering Committee. These scenarios are to be looked at as fictions giving food for thought, especially regarding the main elements which guide progress towards one scenario or the other (triggers, drivers, actors, levers, analysis logic) and also plausibility.

A full report on MED 2050 will be available by mid-October 2023, including methodology, all scenarios, and a first draft of transition pathways/recommendations for inclusion in the COP23 package. A "post-COP" final version will be released early 2024 to include feedback from COP23.

MCSD members are invited to provide comments and suggestions on the methodology and planning proposed regarding the elaboration of the transition pathways; to make suggestions regarding opportunities for further dissemination and debates, up to the Barcelona Convention COP and beyond; and to consider getting involved in the dedicated MED 2050 workshop planned in Tunisia around mid-September 2023.

MCSD members are also invited to consider how the MED 2050 results give indications on the paths and decisions needed to bring the Mediterranean back to sustainability, and in particular, how these indications could be taken into consideration in the frame of the Barcelona Convention processes, including when preparing the next MSSD.

For environmental and economic reasons, this document is printed in a limited number. Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copies to meetings and not to request additional copies.

Introduction

1. As a Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) Regional Activity Centre, Plan Bleu has been mandated by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to carry out analyses and foresight studies to help forge visions of the future and support the decision-making process. To this end, Plan Bleu carried out two foresight projects in 1989 and 2005. The Mediterranean context has evolved considerably since 2005, and the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention have tasked Plan Bleu with a new foresight project for the year 2050 called MED 2050, through Decision IG.24/4 adopted at COP 21 and by Activity 6.1.1 of the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work and Budget for 2022-2023.
2. MED 2050 is an ambitious foresight exercise designed as an original science-policy interface, aiming at mobilising decision-makers and stakeholders from the North and South of the Mediterranean, going beyond geographical and institutional borders. Activities since mid-2021 are described in the progress report (UNEP/MED WG.560/3). The MED 2050 study differs from the previous report published in 2005 which was based on a sectoral and quantitative approach, where only one alternative scenario was considered in addition to the business-as-usual scenario. While MED 2050 is based on some hard data, it is not a forecast of what will happen in thirty years in certain areas, but a foresight exercise examining potential developments between now and 2050 according to the uncertainties of the context and the contrasting political and economic decisions that may be made between now and then.
3. This explains why the system analysed¹, and therefore the number of variables² taken into account, are much more complex than in the previous projects, with, for example, major focus on changes outside the Mediterranean. Another distinctive feature of MED 2050 is that it gives specific, but not exclusive attention to the effects of climate change and changes to the marine ecosystem. It also seeks to fully take into account the diversity of Mediterranean sub-regions, as part of an overall foresight approach for the entire region. Finally, its value lies in not just developing alternative scenarios for the future, with their risks and opportunities, but proposing and discussing realistic transition pathways to achieve them. With this in mind, a specific methodology has been developed to meet these objectives.

I - Methodology: A five-phase Approach

4. The approach adopted for MED 2050 has been divided into five main phases, or modules:
 - i. An initial quantitative and qualitative phase established a basis for analysing the Mediterranean system, exploring the trends, disruptions, or weak signals specific to it, and prioritising the issues (risks or opportunities) for the environment and sustainable development in 2030 - 2050, based on the analysis of about thirty variables.
 - ii. A second phase aimed at consulting stakeholders and co-develop differentiated outlooks for development and the environment in the Mediterranean - with stakeholders (representatives of the political, economic and scientific spheres, environmental associations, youth networks, etc.) and experts from the three Southern, Eastern and Northern sub-regions.
 - iii. A third phase consisted of developing several contrasting scenarios for 2030 - 2050, building on the previous work.

¹ Please refer to Annex 1: The system analysed.

² Please refer to Annex 2: List of structuring variables studied in MED 2050.

- iv. A fourth, more strategic phase focuses on consideration and comparison of possible transition pathways towards sustainable development based on the previous scenarios and involving both experts and stakeholders.
- v. Finally, a last phase aims to promote the results, with several potential audiences: the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system, the countries concerned, the general public, the media and civil society, the scientific community, etc.

II - Organisation and Participatory Approach

5. MED 2050 uses a participatory foresight approach, and whenever possible³, Plan Bleu has applied this methodology throughout the different stages and levels of the project.

6. First of all, in the organisational structure that was set up at the start of the project, with the establishment of different bodies with specific and complementary roles:

- i. A steering committee comprising the dedicated programme team, as well as two foresight experts and Plan Bleu board members;
- ii. A foresight group made up of experts from the three sides of the Mediterranean, specialised in themes considered important for the future of the region: economy, urban planning, coastal areas and the sea, biodiversity, climate change, sociology, geopolitics, security, land-use planning, youth, agriculture, water, etc. Their role is to ensure the consistency of all contributions and analyses through joint synthesis work carried out during working sessions;
- iii. An advisory committee whose role is to ensure that the MED 2050 project achieves the objectives set by the Contracting Parties and partners. It is made up of people representing structuring organisations in the Mediterranean working on themes such as the environment, development, and civil society organisations, as well as representatives of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention.

7. Secondly, by organising workshops specifically targeting young people in the Mediterranean: Youth Commission for the Future of the Mediterranean, which brought together some forty young people from around the Mediterranean by videoconference (March 2022), a participatory workshop in the form of a TV show with young people from the Mediterranean Youth Council as part of the 5th edition of the Mediterranean of the Future in Marseille, France (6 December 2022) and a workshop bringing together thirty young people from the eastern Mediterranean in Alexandria, Egypt (22 and 23 February 2023). Over fifty interviews with different figures from around the Mediterranean world were also conducted in the second phase of the project.

8. Finally, through participation in events for debate with a broad range of stakeholders, broadcast via social media: Workshop on the “Demographics - International Migration - Sustainable Development” nexus by videoconference (15 and 16 December 2021); Workshop on the participatory foresight approach applied to the long-term sustainable management of water in the Moulouya basin, Morocco, by videoconference (12 and 13 January 2022); World Sea Forum in Bizerte, Tunisia (23 and 24 September 2022); Mediterranean of the Future in Marseille, France (5 and 6 December 2022).

III - Summary of Scenarios

9. Six contrasting scenarios have been developed by comparing the different variables and aspects such as the external context, geopolitics and governance of the Mediterranean, demographics and land-use planning, economics, science and technology, society and governance, environment.

³ The health context in which the first two phases of the project took place made this approach difficult. Many of the meetings and workshops were therefore conducted by video conference.

They are very briefly summarised here in three ways, with their title, main characteristics and a brief “pitch” or summary of each.

1. The six MED 2050 Scenarios

Scenario 1	Inertia, marginalisation of the Mediterranean and pragmatism
Scenario 2	Colliding crises and forced adaptations
Scenario 3	Growth at all costs in a fragmented Mediterranean
Scenario 4	Euro-Mediterranean partnership for a blue-green transition
Scenario 5	An alternative sustainable development model specific to the Mediterranean
Scenario 6	The Mediterranean Sea: A global commons

2. Summary Table of Scenarios

Scenario title	S1 - Inertia, marginalisation of the Mediterranean and pragmatism	S2 - Colliding crises and forced adaptations	S3 - Growth at all costs in a fragmented Mediterranean	S4 - Euro-Mediterranean partnership for a blue-green transition	S5 - An alternative sustainable development model specific to the Mediterranean	S6 - The Mediterranean Sea, a global commons
Initial global context	Economic or geopolitical difficulties and climate policy inertia	Global crises, crossing of tipping points	Poorly regulated globalisation, decline of international institutions - Economic liberalism	Global digital economy (4.0) and global competition over green and blue technologies	Deglobalisation and sustainable development a global priority	Alarming climate change and changes to the state of ecosystems, especially oceans
Triggers	Progressive degradation in all sectors	Crises and conflicts over resources (especially water)	Desire to solve unemployment in SEMCs, economic deregulation	Public pressure and EU initiative, success of the Green Deal	Awareness and mobilisation of all actors in the urgent need for action	Rapid degradation of the sea, mobilisation of global civil society
Drivers	<i>Status quo</i> and pragmatism	Strategies for survival and resilience in the face of crises	Economic development and competition - Southern countries catching up and wanting power	Blue-green transition based on digital technologies, new energies and ecological modernisation	Environmental emergencies and international pressures - Self-sufficiency - Changes in values and civil society activism	Care for a common good, start of a virtuous spiral
Actors	States, multinational corporations, lobbying groups, socio-economic	Fossil fuel producers, violent groups, self-organised communities, financial and	States, BRICS, multinational corporations, national “champions”	European Community and Mediterranean Alliance, businesses (digital, energy)	Civil societies and local authorities - Sub-regional alliances - New multi-scale governance structures	International opinion and community, and all Mediterranean actors

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	elites	insurance actors				
Levers (themes and tools)	National support policies, business adaptation, institutional makeshift policies and social adaptation measures	National emergency measures, local resilience strategies, risk management	High growth policies, foreign direct investment - Increasing revenues and comparative advantages	Technical advances, Euro-Mediterranean cooperation on digital technologies and energy - Economic incentives	North/South cooperation, intercultural dialogue and resource pooling - Long-term transition strategies and land-use planning	Preserve the good ecological status of the sea, watersheds, international taxes
Sea	Protection of emblematic species, general degradation of the marine ecosystem	A lawless space, ecosystem disruption	Area for economic trade, with no environmental protection	Intensive but sustainable economic exploitation, which is monitored	Local sea, a protected area to be shared by Mediterranean peoples	Global commons, the focus of all care
Opportunities and benefits	Development of the green economy, some successful adaptations (e.g. energy)	Local resiliencies, invention of new models - Opportunities for revising policies	Economic development in the SEMCs, North/South rebalancing, employment	Green growth and Mediterranean leadership in the blue economy - Low sustainability	Cultural and economic renewal - Invention of an exemplary model of sustainable development	Laboratory and model for protecting regional seas, a common unifying objective
Risks and weaknesses	Political and social risks, irreversible environmental degradation - Marginalisation of the region - Growing gap between promises and results	Disintegration of Mediterranean governance, bankruptcy of some states - Partial collapses	Unsustainability, growing inequalities	Inequalities produced by the transition, social protests, interference by the European Union and the risk of a persisting North/South divide	Vulnerability of the Mediterranean to a climate that it cannot control - Lack of consensus on conservation and resources for endogenous development (e.g. water)	Action focused mainly on the sea - External intervention seen as interference, resistance from lobbying groups, discrepancies between national policies, irreversibility of degradation

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Analysis logic	Test the inertia of the system to its limits and those of the wait-and-see policy	Consider resilience capacities after collapses	Test the limits of the capitalist market economy and economic voluntarism	Explore the benefits (and weaknesses) of an eco-technological transition	Come up with a new sustainable development narrative for the region	Test a “radical” scenario that would allow us to “save the sea” without imposing sustainable development on the entire region
Plausibility	High (business-as-usual)	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Low

3. Summary of scenarios - Pitches

Scenario 1 - Inertia, marginalisation of the Mediterranean and pragmatism

10. In 2050, due to the high inertia of global climate policies, the average temperature has increased by 2.5°C in the Mediterranean. Mediterranean ecosystems are undergoing major degradation that alters their stability and how they function. Socio-environmental disasters (droughts, floods) and socio-political destabilisation (such as the surge in illegal migration) are recurrent, and national economies have been undergoing repeated periods of recession. Some countries in economic crisis are becoming more isolationist, handling internal conflicts through non-democratic regimes. The Mediterranean is, therefore gradually being sidelined from globalisation. Growing internal tensions prevent the emergence of ambitious and sustainable environmental policies. In response to civil societies whose actions are becoming more radical in the face of climate inaction, governments turn to pragmatic policies that do not address the root causes of problems and, therefore cannot curb underlying trends (such as coastal development). They favour short-term policies which, in the medium term, exacerbate inequalities. Regions hit hardest by climate and environmental changes are becoming uninhabitable, which increases inequalities at the territorial, social and economic levels. The Mediterranean of 2050 is a deeply contrasted space, on the verge of fracturing. It is divided between a socio-economic elite barely affected by the effects of climate change and vulnerable populations whose living conditions and future prospects are deteriorating as a result of increasing risks and extreme events such as heat waves, mega-fires and coastal storms and floods.

Scenario 2 - Colliding crises and forced adaptations

11. In the three decades following the year 2020, the Mediterranean is progressively plunged into a spiral of multiple crises that escalate beyond most forecasts. As a whole, the Mediterranean countries have not anticipated the actions necessary to prevent risks that have nevertheless long been known. The inadequacy of prevention and adaptation policies generates new crises that radically change all the characteristics of the region. In a context of chronic instability, there is a dramatic disintegration of political institutions in the Mediterranean, economic and environmental collapses, an increase in inequalities in access to resources, as well as increased violence and food riots with a heavy human cost. Fractures emerge or become more intense at all levels - between the different sides

of the Mediterranean, within states of the region, as well as between the populations of the Mediterranean. However, in the 2040s there is a gradual break with traditional lifestyles and consumption patterns. To survive, Mediterranean countries are forced to adopt various adaptation strategies. Authoritarian modes of governance centred on energy conservation and frugal consumption take hold in some regions of the Mediterranean. In other cases, communities organise themselves locally to compensate for the lack of public action and meet their own needs. Food and water security become an absolute priority throughout the Mediterranean. They force a profound paradigm shift, which is the only viable solution for overcoming the chaos and chronic dependence on international aid, when it is still available.

Scenario 3 - Growth at all costs in a fragmented Mediterranean

12. Climate and environmental warnings have not been heeded. For several decades, all governments faced with unemployment, recession, social upheaval and excessive debt have been in a frantic race to conquer new markets. International bodies have become inoperative, if not totally discredited. In this multipolar world, where nationalistic tensions are exacerbated, economic growth remains the only leitmotif. This is particularly the case in the southern Mediterranean countries, which are still in a phase of accelerating development, demographic growth and catching up with the economies of the North. Priority is given to employment at the expense of the environment. The market, the main factor in both partnership and competition between states, fragments the Mediterranean, which is affected by centrifugal forces. Each country seeks above all to protect its own interests by establishing varying degrees of cooperation, as opportunities arise. In this race to preserve societal balances under the threat of economic and social breakdown, environmental protection is not a priority. The local environment, global problems and therefore the protection of the sea, are relegated to the sidelines in national concerns. They are no longer priorities for public action in most Mediterranean countries - except for direct economic use.

Scenario 4 - Euro-Mediterranean partnership for a blue-green transition

13. By 2050, the Euro-Mediterranean partnership has significantly changed the regional landscape and helped achieve carbon neutrality. Strong regional cooperation, leading to the establishment of a common economic market based on technological and digital innovations, - has been established between the northern, southern and eastern Mediterranean countries. The European Union has extended its Green Deal model to the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries, based on a “conventional” concept of sustainable development, attempting to combine economy and ecology. Having learned lessons from the failure of unilateral or bilateral responses to crises (whether health, political or environmental), the Mediterranean countries work to build a strong partnership across the Euro-Mediterranean region. The strategy to achieve this is the implementation of a blue-green transition at every level, based on a strong technological push. This transition is driven by heavy investments in digitalisation, digital technologies, the blue economy, and the energy transition, and after slow rising awareness and political and social unrest. This transition, based on technological progress in a market economy, is not unanimously accepted, and has several perverse effects.

Scenario 5 - An alternative sustainable development model specific to the Mediterranean

14. Highly sensitive to the worsening ecological and climatic situation and to international pressures, the countries and societies around the Mediterranean are becoming aware of the risks and impasses linked to ecological wait-and-see policy and to poor development. They therefore collectively commit to a process of transition towards a new model of sustainable development, taking into account the strengths and weaknesses specific to the region. After an initial phase mobilising civil societies and territories so that networks for sharing best practices can be established, breakthrough initiatives are implemented at the institutional level. In a context of deglobalisation that promotes

local development of regions, an egalitarian partnership, based on strengthening South-South cooperation and renewed governance, is created. This partnership has the dual objective of reducing regional inequalities and managing certain resources as common-pool resources, ranging from sea and cultural heritage protection, to knowledge production. At the national and local levels, the emphasis is placed on reducing vulnerabilities and external dependencies and investing in new models of development and organisation that meet both the SDGs and the goals for strong sustainability. Priority is thus given to climate, vital resources such as water, soil and marine ecosystem conservation, as well as employment, economic initiative and poverty reduction. Cultures, religions and civil societies, thanks to a change of generation, engage in dialogue and participate, through their various contributions and cooperation, in developing new ethics and cultural pluralism, as well as a fair transition. Based on a realistic expectation of the opportunities and risks associated with the context of the coming decades, the aim is to urgently and collectively develop a new path towards the sustainable development of the region. The Mediterranean invents itself a model specific to it that becomes an example at the global level.

Scenario 6 - The Mediterranean Sea: A global commons

15. The starting point is degradation of the Mediterranean Sea so rapid as to provoke a strong reaction from societies, countries and international organisations. This powerful reaction arises in the late 2030s and leads to the conviction that the Mediterranean Sea can only be saved if it is treated as one of the global commons. This vision is part of a more general “One planet, one ocean, one humanity” approach. The objective of exemplary restoration becomes a priority for the international community, which decides to invest heavily in a programme for restoring the quality of the Mediterranean Sea. This decision is primarily a reaction to the rapid and dramatic degradation of the region, which attracts 400 million tourists. As a microcosm of the challenges facing the entire planet, the Mediterranean united around its sea becomes a kind of test site for learning how to collectively manage a common-pool resource. The Sea thereby becomes a vast laboratory for observation and action and a powerful cooperation tool for Mediterranean countries, opening the door for this dynamic to percolate through the water cycle, downstream to upstream. The good environmental status of the sea, which includes preservation of biodiversity, long-term management of productivity and cutting pollutants, requires that sustainability starts from the sea and works its way up the rivers. A healthy sea requires properly developed coastlines and clean rivers. Human activities impacting the sea are therefore better regulated and controlled, first in coastal areas and then from zone to zone across all catchment areas. The water cycle becomes a vector of good global governance, with the sea as the beneficiary and fruit of the effort invested by Mediterranean countries. The Mediterranean Sea, a global common, becomes the symbol of Mediterranean renewal, developed collectively and with nature.

IV- A final step: collectively developing transition pathways

16. The MED 2050 exercise is at a pivotal point - the development of transition pathways to achieve the best scenarios and avoid the major risks of the “less desirable” scenarios. For this purpose messages from the scenarios will be disseminated when opportunities arise starting July 2023. The goal is to enrich the scenarios and even more importantly, to allow inputs from partners and stakeholders in the collective thinking about the transition pathways. The ANIMA network made a first suggestion by inviting for a MED 2050 presentation and debate with their network during their General Assembly (Cyprus, 10-12 July 2023). Plan Bleu will conduct a stand-alone workshop on MED 2050 in Tunisia around mid-September 2023 (at the margins of the Forum de la Mer), including in a geographical balanced manner working group members and representatives of key partners. MCS D members are encouraged to provide suggestions for other opportunities.

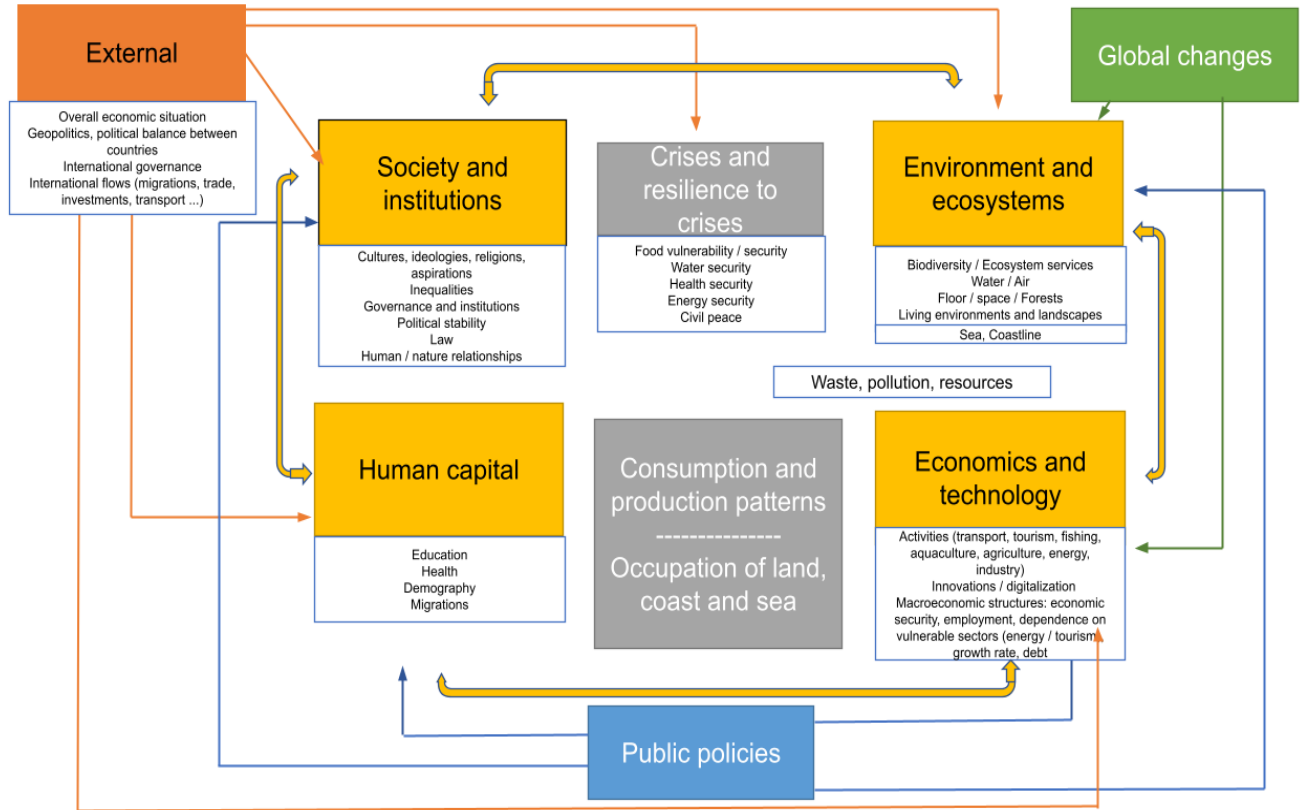
17. A full report on MED 2050 will be available by mid-October, including methodology, all scenarios, and a first draft of transition pathways/recommendations for inclusion in the COP23 package. A "post-COP" final version to include feedback from COP23 will be available early 2024.

18. The main question that the MED 2050 foresight project needs to answer is not what the future will be like in 2050, but rather what transitions from current situations and crises to medium-term action plans and long-term goals and issues should look like. To this end, priority must be given to developing and comparing different transition pathways that take into account the specificities of the different Mediterranean regions and realistically identify the means, opportunities, and obstacles to achieving them. Considered in this way, MED 2050 has an inherently strategic purpose and must be able to help decision-makers develop and evaluate the pathways or strategies required to achieve shared goals in uncertain times. From this perspective, the MED 2050 foresight project could make an important contribution to the future edition of the Mediterranean strategy for sustainable development, with significant involvement of the MCSDD in this last chapter of the MED 2050 programme on the development of transition pathways for sustainable development in the Mediterranean.

19. Pending decisions by the Contracting Parties in COP23 of the Barcelona Convention, and the identification of additional targeted funding, Plan Bleu proposes during the 2024 - 2025 Biennium to support interested Contracting Parties in developing national or sub-regional MED 2050 declinations by presenting MED 2050 results locally or providing technical assistance to integrate those results into foresight studies, strategies and action plans at the sub-regional, national and local levels. Based on a methodological guide to share experience and good practices, the methodological approach, aiming to bring together Mediterranean initiatives, could be applied on different scales within the Mediterranean and beyond and could attract and nurture initiatives in other regional seas.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: The system under analysis



Annex 2: List of structuring variables studied in MED 2050

- FS⁴ 1:** Major global trends (Megatrends) up to 2050 and their consequences for the Mediterranean
- FS 2:** Mediterranean identities
- FS 3:** Geopolitics and security in the Mediterranean
- FS 4:** The place of the Mediterranean in European policies and the Green Deal
- FS 5:** Public and private financing of development in the Mediterranean. What role for Green Finance?
- FS 6:** International governance of the marine environment in the Mediterranean between crisis, continuity and transformation. Evolution and application of the law of the sea and national ownership of maritime spaces
- FS 7:** Population growth in the Mediterranean
- FS 8:** Presence, origin and destination of migrants in the Mediterranean. Trends and perspectives
- FS 9:** Urban transitions in the Mediterranean and their consequences on the environment: urbanisation, urban-rural balance, effects on waste, land ownership, pollution and resources
- FS 10:** Concentration of human activities in coastal and sea areas: competition, cumulative effects and risks
- FS 11:** Climate change and its impacts on land and sea
- FS 12:** Adaptation issues and policies, between vulnerability and resilience
- FS 13:** Changes to greenhouse gas emissions and mitigation policies
- FS 14:** Transformations of the Mediterranean ecosystem and its impact on marine and coastal biodiversity
- FS 15:** Exploitation and ownership of Mediterranean marine mineral and energy resources (gas exploitation, deep sea mineral resources, renewable energies, etc.). The consequences of offshore expansion
- FS 16:** The future of fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean and its impacts (ecological and social impacts, etc.)
- FS 17:** The evolution of “living” resources and natural biodiversity on land
- FS 18:** The water-soil-agriculture-environment nexus
- FS 19:** Energy transition in the Mediterranean region - towards climate neutrality
- FS 20:** Economic growth dynamics
- FS 21:** The knowledge society
- FS 22:** The blue economy: opportunities, obstacles and risks
- FS 23:** Maritime transport, port infrastructure in the Mediterranean, international trade and pollution related to these activities
- FV 24:** Tourism and tourist mobility: future prospects and impacts of these activities on the environment and coastal and regional economies
- FS 25:** Inequalities, poverty, changes to social mobility, informal economy and solidarity system: towards an increase in social divisions ?
- FS 26:** Changes to the value system and religiosities
- FS 27:** The place of young people in society and intergenerational relationships, youth employment and care for the elderly.
- FS 28:** The situation of women in the Mediterranean
- FS 29:** Modifications in production and consumption patterns
- FS 30:** Role and development of civil society in public policies
- FS 31:** Risk and crisis prevention: anticipation, public action and collective resilience
- FS 32:** Multi-scale and multi-actor governance
- FS 33:** Environmental awareness: the role of the media and civil society organisations
- FS 34:** Policy coherence and regional cooperation for sustainable development
- FS 35:** Water resource management
- FS 36:** Observation, monitoring and warning systems in the Mediterranean

⁴ FS : Factsheet