



DONORS' INITIATIVE FOR MEDITERRANEAN FRESHWATER ECOSYSTEMS

# PROTECTING AND RESTORING MEDITERRANEAN FRESHWATER ECOSYSTEMS

# FRESHWATER ECOSYSTEMS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: IN CRITICAL NEED OF PROTECTION

The Donors' Initiative for Mediterranean Freshwater Ecosystems (DIMFE) builds on the legacy and experience of foundations with a long tradition of supporting freshwater conservation.

The protection of freshwater ecosystems is one of the major challenges of the twenty-first century. These ecosystems are home to 12% of all known species and provide a wide variety of ecosystem services. For example, they contribute to human well-being by providing drinking water and irrigation for crops. They also provide nature-based solutions: their protection and restoration can help regulate our climate and protect against floods, droughts or coastal storms.

Freshwater organisms have an extinction rate four to six times higher than marine organisms. Since 1993, freshwater vertebrate populations have declined by an average of 28% within the Mediterranean basin. Today, 36% of the remaining species are endangered (Tour du Valat, 2021).

Conservation measures through local, national and regional action as well as international cooperation are needed to combat these threats and ensure the proper management of these ecosystems.

Despite their vital importance and the services they provide, these fragile ecosystems remain significantly undervalued and underfunded.

Major international conferences on climate, biodiversity, and even water often fail to address the urgent need to protect these ecosystems.

In response to this pressing issue, the Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation, the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, and the MAVA Foundation established the Donors' Initiative for Mediterranean Freshwater Ecosystems (DIMFE) in 2021. This coalition has since been strengthened by the support of the Hans Wilsdorf Foundation and the Sigrid Rausing Trust, with a focus specifically on the conservation and restoration of these fragile ecosystems.

The PA2F's unique position - as the only foundation headed by a Head of State - enables us to raise these issues to the highest political level, thereby promoting their inclusion on international agendas.

Pooling funds enables us to maximize the impact of available resources while avoiding duplication of efforts. We invite new donors and partners to join DIMFE so that, together, we can expand our reach and amplify our influence in the protection of freshwater ecosystems.

## MAIN THREATS

### Agriculture

Many areas have been converted to agricultural use



### Development

Urbanisation and industrialisation contribute to the destruction of many ecosystems



### Hydrological changes

Dams and dykes reduce nature's ability to regulate itself



### Sedimentation et erosion

Vegetation is essential for keeping rivers clear



### Pollution

Agriculture, industry and urbanisation pollute and damage biodiversity and reduce the resilience of natural processes



### Invasive species

Alien species can compete with native species and perturb ecosystems



### Climate crisis

Climate change damages freshwater ecosystems





# ZOOM ON FUNDED PROJECTS

In **Albania**, the plans to construct an international airport in the Vjosa Delta, within the Vjosë-Nartë protected area, is threatening a site internationally recognised for its beauty and rich biodiversity, home to more than 200 species of birds such as the flamingo and the pelican. The NGO **Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA)** plans to expand the Civil Society Coalition against the airport construction and to carry out lobbying and advocacy actions to stop the project and to improve the management of this protected area including the conservation of the bird species present, and the restoration of their habitats.

In **Malta**, the Environment and Resources Authority has developed a management plan to preserve the Salini wetlands. **Birdlife Malta** will rehabilitate a freshwater wetland in this natural reserve and subsequently create an educational area. The aim is to ensure the complete protection of this freshwater ecosystem and to restore this important habitat.

Livanjsko polje in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** is designated by Ramsar as a Wetland of International Importance and an Important Bird Area, but its value is not recognized at national level. **EuroNatur Foundation** and partners are working for its official national recognition as a fully protected area, thus strengthening the sustainable management of the area. The project also includes restoration and conservation measures, as well as awareness-raising activities.

Without proper management, freshwater ecosystems in the **Croatian** karst mountains are bound to disappear which would have significant impacts on biodiversity. **Association BIOM** and its partners are working together to provide solutions to assess the current state of these ecosystems and to develop a methodology to restore ten priority sites. Awareness-raising activities will also be implemented to ensure their long-term conservation.



KEY FIGURES



**16** PROJECTS  
SUPPORTED

**10 700 000** € ALREADY  
SECURED  
SINCE 2021

**11** COUNTRIES  
INVOLVED

The iconic natural site of the Prespa lakes, shared by **Greece**, Albania and Northern Macedonia, is a crucial freshwater site for the three countries. Today, the various riparian zones around Prespa face rapid degradation due to numerous threats. The **Society for the Protection of Prespa (SPP)** seeks to improve knowledge and understanding of the ecological roles, threats and value of the rivers and riparian habitats of the Greek part of Prespa. Concrete actions to rehabilitate these areas and raise awareness among stakeholders, authorities and local populations will be implemented.

The Sebou Water Fund was initiated in **Morocco** in 2019. It is a sustainable funding mechanism that benefits local communities responsible for natural resource management in the upper Sebou basin. Through local NGOs, the Fund has implemented projects on water conservation, sustainable agricultural practices and implemented socio-economic development and capacity building. It is the first fund of its kind in the Middle East and North Africa and the second on the African continent. This project ensures social ownership and the ability to finance freshwater ecosystem conservation projects by local stakeholders. Initially launched in the Upper Sebou sub-basin, **Living Planet Morocco (LPM)** will work to extend this Fund to cover the entire basin.





# WHAT'S **NEXT?**

Freshwater ecosystems in the Mediterranean are essential for the ecosystem services and nature-based solutions they provide. To enable a more effective and strategic action, collaboration among funders and among actors in the field is crucial to protect and restore freshwater ecosystems and prevent their decline.

For this reason, DIMFE's founding members wish to expand the Initiative and welcome new private or public actors interested in joining DIMFE to conserve, together, freshwater ecosystems in the Mediterranean.

Joining DIMFE will allow your organisation to:

- Benefit from a proven and effective operational mechanism,
- Substantially increase its funding capacity through pooling resources,
- Unite around a common vision and gain greater visibility,
- Contribute to supporting concrete and sustainable projects and develop DIMFE's network to strengthen its impact in the field.

Join us to maximise DIMFE's impact.

**JOIN US!**

# ABOUT THE DONORS' INITIATIVE FOR MEDITERRANEAN FRESHWATER ECOSYSTEMS (DIMFE)

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**The Donors' Initiative for Mediterranean Freshwater Ecosystems (DIMFE) was created in 2021 by three founding members: the Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation, the MAVA Foundation and the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation. Since then, the Hans Wilsdorf Foundation and the Sigrid Rausing Trust have joined the initiative.**

DIMFE focuses on the conservation and restoration of freshwater ecosystems and their biodiversity in the Mediterranean basin. The Initiative aims to support projects with strong impact in the field.

In 2021, after the launch of DIMFE at the World Conservation Congress in Marseille in the presence of His Serene Highness the Prince Albert II of Monaco, the first call for projects to protect Mediterranean freshwater ecosystems was launched.

## **DIMFE ACTIONS**

- Address the critical funding gap for freshwater ecosystem preservation in the Mediterranean
- €10.7 million secured in the basket fund since its creation, dedicated to project support
- Annual call for projects
- €2 million budget per call
- Support ranging from 100 000€ to 500 000€ per project

The Initiative relies on a network of experts from the Mediterranean Water Institute who assess the projects supported and advises the Initiative in its actions and communications strategy.

DIMFE is hosted by the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, which provides in-kind coordination support.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION | [WWW.DIMFE.ORG](http://WWW.DIMFE.ORG) |**

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