

An underwater photograph of a coral reef, showing a large, flat, white coral plate with a brownish-orange border. The water is dark and slightly murky. The image is framed by a teal hexagonal shape on the right side.

THE MEDITERRANEAN FORUM

Circle the Med

The Mediterranean Hybrid Forum 2022

Key conclusions

The third edition of Circle the Med - circlethemed.com - which took place in Athens at the Zappeion historic building from 23-25 November was held for the first time physically and in a hybrid format.

The Forum has had an immense success, both in terms of participation, but also of quality of themes and speakers: more than 400 people have participated in person and more than 3200 online, from 60 countries of the broader Mediterranean region. The themes have covered holistically all the critical circular economy issues « lato sensu » and were presented by distinguished speakers, decision makers, academic, business community and civil society representatives. They have moreover presented the outcomes of COP27 and ideas and proposals in relation to their implementation.

Circle the Med is now well established; as an institution and a sounding board, as a network of key players in the region, as a climate, environmental and energy, but also cultural diplomacy forum. It is the circular economy network par excellence and the forum within which best practices are developed, capacity and institutional building initiatives and synergies initiated, and bridges built between the north and the south shore of the Mediterranean.

Circular economy is developed as the overarching new economic model mainstreamed in the three key pillars of the EU, namely Green Growth, Blue Economy and Digital Economy to make them circular. It is moreover mainstreamed both vertically and horizontally. Vertically through new circular governance models from the central state, to the regional and the local - city - level. Moreover, it is extended through the ESG to the business level. Horizontally this mainstreaming extends also to all the policies developed at EU and national level to make them circular, such as circular tourism, fisheries and aquaculture, agriculture, transport, energy etc. These concepts were promoted throughout the two and a half days of the Forum, together with a new concept of circular culture which is needed at business and civil society level to boost circularity. New ideas, such as circular household and circular citizen were presented and promoted as new concepts to boost the circular and energy transition and reach ultimately carbon neutrality.

Dedicated panels were devoted to green growth, blue and digital economy, cultural heritage and its protection from climate change impacts, promotion of cultural cooperation, promotion of green energy projects between Egypt and Greece and more broadly the north and south shore, best practices on all the above and of course green financing with references to Taxonomy priorities and classification. The climate and environmental issues of the Mediterranean were particularly addressed.

The Med is more threatened by the climate crisis compared to other seas, in particular as regards the rise of the sea level, which threatens in particular its coastal areas and islands. It has also a heavy litter pollution, in particular because of plastics and microplastics which have infected the food chain and threaten biodiversity. The problems were thoroughly identified and solutions and best practices proposed in particular as regards prevention and management of litter/plastic in the framework of circular economy standards.

The prerequisite for a stronger cooperation, not only among the Mediterranean countries, but also amongst them and the relevant Mediterranean Institutions was highlighted and analysed. The respective roles of the Union for the Mediterranean, the UNEP MAP established in Athens and the Barcelona Convention framework, the neighbourhood policy of the EU and the NPI, the EU Interreg Med programme and all the relevant initiatives were presented and the need to develop synergies and interaction amongst them stressed. Particular emphasis in connection with the above was given to the EPLO (www.EPLO.org) which provides the framework through its Institute for circular economy and climate for the hosting of circlethemed, and to its activities on institutional and capacity building, as well as training. The Arab Republic of Egypt is a privileged partner of Circle the Med since its inception, and the presence at the opening of the Forum of the Egyptian Ambassador - who has also presented the outcomes of COP 27 - has stressed this cooperation and the perspectives for a stronger relationship between Egypt and the EPLO.

Last but not least, the presence at the closing ceremony of the Ambassador of the UAE has shown their interest in the Forum and illustrated cooperation avenues with the view to COP 28 in Dubai.

Circle the Med is not only a yearly Forum. It is a living Institution which operates throughout the year and organizes webinars, meetings, awareness raising initiatives, presents position papers and participates in international fora on its own, but also through the EPLO and its circular economy and climate institute. It has developed a network of 60 countries, universities and a community that participate actively and follow physically or remotely its activities.

Circle the Med is looking forward to more cooperation and synergies in this top down and bottom up process that it is developing in the interest of promoting further circular economy, boosting energy transition and combating the climate crisis.

George Kremlis

President of the Circle the Med Forum

