

This year has shown us, more than ever before, that our relationship with nature is deeply impaired and must be restored. Healthy forests are a fundamental source of life and well-being, and we need to address the vulnerability of forests to fires, climate change and irrational use of forest resources. We need to reconnect nature with health and sustainability, to preserve biodiversity, while ensuring the regeneration, vitality and potential of forests to meet the needs of present and future generations. Medforval's contribution to the integrity and resilience of Mediterranean forest landscapes is vital for both people and nature. Read on for our latest news.

Let's stop the circulation of the virus, but not the circulation of news!

Together to protect forests: sign our petition



#Together4Forests

Right now we have a once-in-a-lifetime
chance to curb deforestation: join us!

Forests are essential for our survival. They are home to millions of plants, insects, animals and people. Healthy forests protect us from diseases and viruses and absorb carbon emissions from the atmosphere. **But many of the products we buy in Europe are directly linked to deforestation** and degradation of other habitats, like grasslands and wetlands, across the globe. We are asking the European Commission for **a strong law** that stops products linked to deforestation from entering the EU market by the end of 2021. Let the European Commission know you care about this issue and demand a change now. [Sign our petition](#) linked to the public consultation launched by the European Commission and Act NOW **#Together4Forests** to protect our future.

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Photo: Poblet Parc Natural, ©Ferran Aguilar

Act now to curb deforestation

United we stand – against forest fires



Most countries in the Mediterranean basin are facing the same emergency regarding rural fires. With conditions being increasingly favourable for fire crises, the resulting environmental and economic damage pose a severe risk to people and nature. Exacerbated by climate change and changes in land use and urbanization, the most recent megafires have shown how the landscape, forests, current fire fighting systems and society as a whole are simply not

prepared. **A report**, coordinated by WWF Spain (with WWF France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Turkey), **analyses the causes of these fires** in the northern Mediterranean and **considers potential solutions**, offering cross-border proposals to address this shared problem. The only effective strategy is to **design a real prevention system**, making the territory less hazardous and more resilient to climate change.

Medforval sites were also affected by forest fires this summer, caused predominantly by people's lack of responsibility but also deliberately lit, as site staff reported: *"Forest fires occur because of reckless people and picnicking activities; while we encourage ecotourism people and visitors do not feel responsible for their actions."*, *"Fires here are all of anthropogenic origin... malicious or negligent..."*. However, **with the engagement and commitment of volunteers from a number of local communities they were able to fight the fires and avoid more extensive loss.**

In general, in Iberia, megafires occur as a result of fuel accumulation in huge areas after abandonment of traditional agriculture and livestock husbandry. An excellent example of the positive potential of participatory action and social innovation arose following a severe megafire event in 2015 in Sierra de Gata-Hurdes, a Spanish area in Extremadura, close to the Portuguese border. An innovative initiative – the **Mosaico Project** – proposed the design of a **fire-smart, mosaic landscape** based on new agropastoral practices in dense forests, and forest practices reducing stand density and thus fire risk. The participatory process was stimulated through the **project website**, extension services, workshops, personal interviews, and opinion surveys, with outstanding results. This experience is among the Forest and Landscape Restoration practices in the Mediterranean being collected by Medforval, Istituto Oikos and ACS.

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Photo: © AYKUT İNCE / OGM, TURKEY

Sustainable Wood Energy: preventing forest fires



In the Shouf Biosphere Reserve in Lebanon a briquette plant is producing **cheap, clean energy** that is becoming an increasingly valued **alternative to firewood and diesel** – the main energy sources in most households – while significantly reducing the risk of fires. The Kfarfakoud Briquettes Center has developed thanks to the adaptive forest landscape restoration plan of the Reserve which includes the management of abandoned coppice woodlands (mainly evergreen and broadleaf oak) to turn them into old-growth stand thereby increasing their ecological value. The thinning of the woodlands has resulted in the **production of considerable amounts of biomass**, and the briquette plant has “closed the circle”, making use of the biomass, an ingenious best practice contributing to the global process towards a more sustainable management of natural resources. **The collection of this biomass** – along with woodland pruning waste – **has decreased the number of autumn fires in the Reserve**. The production of the briquettes and the sustainable management of the forest are helping prevent fires and pollution from agricultural waste, and mitigate the problems caused by the CO₂ emissions from fossil fuels and forest fires, while converting waste into an economic and rural development opportunity.

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Photo: Biomass Briquettes © Shouf Biosphere Reserve

Building bridges for cross-border cooperation in

Prokletije



In Prokletije National Park in southeastern Montenegro, at the border with Albania and Kosovo, a project is **fostering collaboration between young people in the Transboundary Dinaric Alps**. A five-day summer school was held recently to strengthen environmental awareness on the protection and promotion of the cross-border area. The participants (18-24 years old) addressed a wide range of topics including lobbying and raising awareness on issues affecting communities, developing project proposals and building campaigns. They also had plenty of opportunities to appreciate the natural and cultural attractions of the region and to discuss the natural values of the area, tourist potential, and opportunities, as well as the challenges of environmental protection.

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Photo: Youth Camp in Prokletije, © Irma Muhović

Valuable exchange towards restoration of the Ticino Basin



There has been an important step forward in the initiative to restore the Ticino River Basin Landscape, by the Medforval member site Ticino Valley in partnership with several Italian and Swiss entities and Istituto Oikos. **The push to develop forest-related priorities** to be included in the forthcoming landscape restoration plan was the focus of a workshop, held on 28 October, looking closely at the management of forests in floodplains and in protected areas, forest restoration favourable to wildlife and the resilience of forests to extreme climate events. While the workshop participants are all partners in this initiative, and in regular contact, **the workshop provided a much-needed opportunity for an exchange of views between different countries, experts and agencies.** The Ticino Basin restoration has been framed from the outset as a participatory process aimed at achieving the resilience of ecosystems and human communities through the provision of environmental, social and economic benefits, and can be counted among the initiatives implementing Forest and Landscape Restoration.

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Photo: Parco Lombardo della Valle del Ticino

Jordan Valley Photo Exhibition



As part of a campaign to highlight the environmental importance of the Jordan Valley, home to the Jordan EcoPark, a Medforval member site, **EcoPeace's Palestinian education team produced a photography exhibition.**

Showcasing the local ecology of the Jordan Valley and the importance of protecting our environmental heritage, which is one the goals of the EcoPark, the exhibition – Jordan Valley: History and Reality – was complemented by **a series of tours and activities in the Jordan Valley area.** It was enjoyed by school students, academics, young people and other community members. See [here](#) for a peek inside the exhibition.

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Photo: Exhibition © EcoPeace Middle East