From Commitment to Action

Mapping and Harmonizing Climate Education across Mediterranean Universities

Outreach Event of the Euromed University Initiative for Climate Action - Girona Manifesto

Organizers: Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and UNIMED - Mediterranean Universities Union
Format: In-person session - Presentation of results and panel discussion
Date and time: 17 November 2026, 10:00-11:00 (Antalya time)
Venue: Mediterranean Pavilion (Blue Zone, B2 Area - D400)
Language: English

Concept Note

Background and Rationale

The Mediterranean is a recognized climate hotspot, warming 20% faster than the global average and facing rising sea levels, extreme heat, biodiversity loss and water scarcity. These pressures are intensified by fragile peace, social tensions and displacement risks. In this context, universities have a fundamental role to play: they shape mindsets, train the professionals and decision-makers of tomorrow, and generate the knowledge on which climate policies depend. Yet Mediterranean universities still lack systematic data, institutional coordination and capacity to deliver effective climate education. Existing courses often reach few students, climate education remains largely confined to scientific fields, and efforts remain fragmented, relying on isolated initiatives rather than systemic change.

The **Euromed University Initiative for Climate Action** was conceived to address this gap. It originated at the UfM Higher Education Stakeholders' Meeting "Greening Education in the Mediterranean: A Cross-Cutting Challenge for Universities" (Girona, June 2025), co-organized by the UfM, UNIMED and the University of Girona, and its foundational declaration, the **Girona Manifesto**, was opened for endorsement in July 2025. The Manifesto sets out four areas of commitment: advancing regional cooperation in climate education; making climate education a curricular baseline; including students in climate governance and action; and supporting innovation smart hubs. It was officially launched at COP30 in Belém on 12 November 2025 and has gathered so far around 120 higher education and research institutions across the region.

This session also builds on a path that UNIMED and the UfM have followed together at successive COPs. At COP27 (Sharm El-Sheikh, 2022), the UNIMED SubNetwork on Climate and Environmental Change organized a hybrid panel at the Mediterranean Pavilion on "How to close the climate knowledge gaps in the Mediterranean region", highlighting universities as a science-policy interface. At COP29 (Baku, 2024), a hybrid peer-to-peer session organized by the UfM with UNIMED, "Towards climate-smart university curricula in the Mediterranean", brought universities together to share practices on adapting curricula to climate change, including the funding of curriculum reform, and presented the preliminary results of a survey on the existing curricula offered by the region's universities. At COP30 (Belém, 2025), the Euromed University Initiative for Climate Action was launched through an online event followed by an in-person roundtable at the Pavilion with university initiatives from other regions. From diagnosing the gap, to testing curricula, to launching a regional initiative, COP31 is the moment to present results.

Those results come from the technical assistance UNIMED is carrying out to implement the first two priorities of the Girona Manifesto: a **mapping exercise and gap analysis** of climate-related academic offerings across the Euro-Mediterranean region, highlighting flagship initiatives and accompanied by a digital publication and platform, and **regional curriculum guidelines** that promote coherence, comparability and quality in tertiary climate education, facilitate joint degrees and the mutual recognition of credits, and remain aligned with global frameworks such as UNESCO's Greening Curriculum Guidance and the UNFCCC's UN Climate Change Universities Partnership Programme. A Master Class for academic leaders and faculty, planned for December, will translate both outputs into practice.

Objectives

The session aims to:

1. **Present the findings of the mapping exercise and gap analysis**, highlighting regional trends, existing programme strengths, identified gaps and opportunities for collaboration, and introduce the digital platform of climate-related programmes.
2. **Introduce and explain the curriculum guidelines**, demonstrating their relevance for universities, ministries, accreditation bodies and other stakeholders.
3. **Showcase best practices** from flagship initiatives already integrating climate education, sustainability principles or interdisciplinary approaches, from the Northern and Southern shores of the Mediterranean.
4. **Promote regional dialogue** among higher education institutions, policymakers and international partners to encourage alignment with Euro-Mediterranean climate commitments, thus contributing to COP31 discussions on climate education and capacity-building.
5. **Encourage uptake and piloting**, inviting institutions to adopt, adapt or test the proposed guidelines and to explore joint degree pathways and credit-recognition mechanisms.
6. **Support the reinforcement of a Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education Area**, providing relevant inputs in view of the *2027 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Higher Education*.

Key Messages

The session will promote five core messages:

1. **Universities as fundamental actors of Climate Action in the Mediterranean**
   In a region warming faster than the global average, universities do not only respond to the climate crisis: they train the next generations, produce the knowledge that informs policy and act as drivers of human development.

2. **What is visible can be strengthened**
   Mapping the existing climate-related academic offer provides the evidence base to benchmark programmes, identify competencies gaps, inform student choices and make Mediterranean initiatives visible to donors and policymakers.

3. **To harmonize does not mean to uniformize**
   Curriculum guidelines adapted to the environmental, socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the region, and aligned with global frameworks such as the UNESCO Greening Curriculum Guidance, can improve comparability and quality while respecting institutional diversity.

4. **Climate education must be cross-cutting and interdisciplinary**
   Climate education cannot remain confined to scientific fields: social sciences, arts and humanities, and interdisciplinary faculty training are needed to embed climate literacy across all disciplines.

5. **From a community of signatories to a Community of Practice**
   Joint degrees, mutual credit recognition and piloting of the guidelines turn the commitments of the Girona Manifesto into concrete actions, active cooperation, and connect the Mediterranean community with similar initiatives around the world.

Agenda

10:00 - 10:05 | Opening and introduction

Joan Borrell, Deputy Secretary General for Stability and Resilience, Union for the Mediterranean

10:05 - 10:20 | Presentation of the results of the mapping exercise, gap analysis, and curriculum guidelines

Adil Salhi, Coordinator of UNIMED's Subnetwork Climate and Environmental Change and the Euromed University Initiative for Climate Action, Abdelmalek Essadi University, Morocco

Key highlights:

- Mapping exercise and gap analysis: regional trends, flagship initiatives, strengths and gaps
- The digital platform and repository of climate-related programmes: how to use it and contribute to it
- Curriculum guidelines: structure, the six key concepts of the UNESCO Greening Curriculum Guidance and tools for joint degrees and credit recognition
- Link with the Master Class and next steps of the Initiative

10:20 - 10:50 | Panel discussion

Moderator: **João Lobo**, Project Analyst, Union for the Mediterranean

Speakers:

- **Ayşe Şenai Koç**, Professor, Cağ University, Türkiye
- **Laila Ayman**, Head of Research and Innovation Support Unit, Heliopolis University for Sustainable Development, Egypt
- **Patrizia Lombardi**, Vice-Rector for Sustainable Campus and Living Lab, Politecnico di Torino, Italy
- **Petra Minnerop**, Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Sustainability, Durham University, UK
- **Stephen Davison**, Director of Strategy, Cambridge Zero, University of Cambridge, UK

10:55 - 11:00 | Closing messages and next steps