



Local value chains as alternatives to plastic Mediterranean solutions for prevention, reuse, and territorial resilience

4th REMEDIES Policy Workshop Report and Policy Recommendations

8 April 2026 | Online Webinar

SMILO & MedWaves

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Introduction: Purpose and policy relevance of the webinar

The webinar “Local value chains as alternatives to plastic” was organised on 8 April 2026 by SMILO and MedWaves within the framework of the Horizon Europe REMEDIES project and the CapiMed+ initiative.

The objective of the webinar was to explore how territorially rooted value chains can contribute to reducing plastic pollution in Mediterranean coastal and island territories by developing sustainable, locally adapted alternatives to single-use plastics.

The discussions highlighted that tackling plastic pollution requires moving beyond simple material substitution. Local value chains offer a systemic approach combining prevention, reuse, local resource valorisation, circular economy principles, and territorial resilience.

The webinar also provided an overview of the evolving international, Mediterranean, and European regulatory frameworks addressing plastic pollution, including:

- The Barcelona Convention and the Regional Plan on Marine Litter;
- The EU Single-Use Plastics Directive (SUP);
- The Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR).

Attention was given to concrete Mediterranean initiatives demonstrating how local resources, traditional knowledge, innovation, and community engagement can support regenerative and zero-waste approaches.

Workshop overview and agenda

Field	Description
Title	Local value chains as alternatives to plastic
Workshop	4th REMEDIES Policy Workshop
Date	8 April 2026
Location	Online webinar
Moderation	SMILO
Main format	Presentations combined with questions from the audience

Structure

Part 1 – Regulatory & Policy Framework

Speakers:

- Ignasi Mateo
- Matias Ibáñez

Topics:

- Plastic pollution in marine and coastal environments
- Barcelona Convention and Mediterranean marine litter strategy
- EU SUP Directive
- Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR)

Part 2 – Local Value Chains & Innovative Solutions

Moderation:

- Ambre Badiqué

Presented initiatives:

- Seaweed-based zero-waste cosmetic capsules (NIC – Slovenia)
- Reusable cup and washing infrastructure systems (PLUG-AND-PLAY 2 ZERO-WASTE)
- Atmospheric water generators replacing bottled water (Kumulus)
- Organic rye straws (La Perche)
- Wheat stem straws (Staramaki)
- Handcrafted palm branch objects and fishing traps (AKDDCL – Tunisia)

Methodology

This webinar combined:

- presentations on public policy and regulatory frameworks;
- technical and entrepreneurial case studies;
- exchanges of experiences from Mediterranean territories;
- interactive discussions and Q&A sessions.

The objective was to connect policy frameworks with concrete implementation models and identify practical approaches that could be replicated in coastal and island regions. Beyond showcasing existing initiatives, the webinar also encouraged Mediterranean territories to reflect on their own local contexts: Do local value chains already exist that could provide alternatives to plastic? What are the main barriers to their development? Which local resources, agricultural residues, green waste, or traditional skills could be mobilised to create new regenerative value chains?

The webinar brought together REMEDIIES partners, circular economy stakeholders from across the Mediterranean, public policy experts from MedWaves (UNEP/MAP Regional Activity Centre), and partners from the CapiMed+ initiative working on Mediterranean islands to reduce plastic pollution. For the CapiMed+ partners, the webinar represented a first collective step, which was followed one month later by an in-person workshop dedicated to exploring the realities, opportunities, and challenges specific to their own territories in greater depth.

Part 1: Policy frameworks to tackle plastic pollution

The first part of the webinar highlighted the growing multi-level governance framework addressing plastic pollution at international, Mediterranean, and European levels.

Speakers stressed that current policy developments increasingly prioritise:

- waste prevention;
- reuse systems;
- circular economy approaches;
- reduction of unnecessary packaging;
- local alternatives to single-use plastics.

At Mediterranean level, the Barcelona Convention Regional Plan on Marine Litter was presented as a key framework supporting coastal and island territories in developing prevention-oriented solutions and local circular economies.

At European level, the SUP Directive and the PPWR were identified as major drivers accelerating the transition away from disposable plastic products, particularly in tourism, hospitality, takeaway food, and event sectors.

The discussions also emphasised that regulatory frameworks alone are insufficient without:

- local implementation capacity;
- economic incentives;
- territorial cooperation;
- behavioural change;
- support for innovation and small-scale local actors

Part 2: Local value chains and innovative Mediterranean solutions

The second part of the webinar focused on practical examples of regenerative local value chains developed across the Mediterranean.

Definition: regenerative local value chains

The webinar recalled that regenerative local value chains are territorially rooted systems designed to prevent waste at source and replace single-use plastics through:

- local sourcing;
- short supply chains;
- reuse systems;
- biodegradable or compostable biomaterials;
- circular resource management.

Rather than focusing only on replacing plastic with another disposable material, these approaches aim to redesign the full production and consumption system while generating environmental, economic, and social benefits locally.

Common characteristics of the initiatives

Despite their diversity, the initiatives presented shared several common features:

- Use of locally available resources (seaweed, rye, wheat stems, palm branches, atmospheric humidity);
- Short and decentralised production chains;
- Strong territorial anchoring;
- Prevention-oriented approaches prioritising reuse and waste reduction;
- Combination of innovation and traditional knowledge;
- Contribution to local resilience, particularly in island and coastal contexts.

Main environmental benefits identified

The initiatives demonstrated several environmental benefits:

- reduction of single-use plastic consumption;
- reduction of marine litter;
- lower transport emissions through local production;
- valorisation of agricultural residues and green waste;
- support for circular economy objectives;
- contribution to EU and Mediterranean regulatory targets.

Several solutions also illustrated how local value chains can support reuse systems and packaging-free consumption models instead of replacing one disposable item with another.

Economic and social dimensions

The webinar highlighted that local value chains can:

- create local employment opportunities;
- diversify rural and island economies;
- support artisanal and cooperative activities;
- strengthen local autonomy;
- revitalise traditional skills and crafts;
- encourage behavioural change among consumers and tourism actors.

Several initiatives also demonstrated the importance of women-led and community-based economic activities.

Common barriers discussed

Participants identified recurring challenges:

- competition with cheap plastic products;
- higher production costs at small scale;
- logistical constraints;
- consumer habits and resistance to change;
- regulatory and hygiene constraints;
- difficulties scaling up while maintaining territorial anchoring;
- limited access to funding and visibility.

Cross-cutting insights

Several cross-cutting lessons emerged from the webinar discussions:

- Prevention is more effective than simple substitution. Reuse systems and packaging-free models generate stronger environmental benefits than replacing plastics with other disposable materials.
- Local resources are strategic assets. Agricultural residues, marine biomass, and green waste can become valuable inputs for regenerative local economies.
- Islands are particularly relevant testing grounds for circular and decentralised systems due to their logistical constraints and vulnerability to plastic pollution.
- Local value chains require systemic approaches combining regulation, innovation, behavioural change, local governance, and economic support.
- Traditional knowledge and artisanal practices can play a central role in modern circular economy strategies.
- Regulatory frameworks such as the SUP Directive and PPWR create opportunities for scaling up local alternatives.

Policy recommendations

Recommendation No1

Support prevention and reuse systems before promoting material substitution.

Recommendation No2

Develop local value chains based on locally available renewable or recovered resources.

Recommendation No3

Strengthen support mechanisms for small-scale local producers, cooperatives, and artisans.

Recommendation No4

Facilitate connections between innovators, designers, researchers, artisans, municipalities, and tourism stakeholders.

Recommendation No5

Use islands as living laboratories for circular and decentralised solutions.

Recommendation No6

Promote public procurement practices favouring reusable, local, and low-impact alternatives.

Recommendation No7

Improve visibility and networking among Mediterranean initiatives to accelerate replication and knowledge exchange.

Recommendation No8



Support experimentation around agricultural residues, marine biomass, and green waste as alternatives to plastic.

Next steps identified during the webinar

Several potential follow-up actions were identified:

- establishing exchanges between territories and showcased initiatives;
- connecting local actors with entrepreneurs and artisans already developing alternatives;
- identifying locally available biomass and agricultural residues that could support new value chains;
- exploring opportunities for pilot projects in islands and coastal territories;
- strengthening cooperation between Mediterranean stakeholders working on plastic prevention and circular economy solutions.

Conclusion

The webinar demonstrated that regenerative local value chains can provide practical and territorially adapted responses to plastic pollution in the Mediterranean.

The initiatives presented showed that alternatives to plastic are not limited to new materials but involve broader transformations in production systems, consumption habits, local governance, and resource management.

By combining local resources, innovation, traditional knowledge, and prevention-oriented approaches, Mediterranean territories can strengthen resilience while contributing to European and international objectives on plastic pollution reduction and circular economy transition.

