

The Maristanis project was born with the aim of restoring, protecting and connecting the wetlands of the Oristano Gulf in an integrated system of governance and sustainable development. With their 7,700 hectares, the wetlands stretching from Capu Mannu to the Marceddi lagoon constitute an ecosystem of priceless value. The ponds of Sale Porcus, Cabras, Mistras, Pauli Maiori, S'Ena Arrubia, Corru S'Ittiri, San Giovanni and Marceddi compose six sites recognized by the Ramsar Convention, the accord that since 1971 directs in 170 countries the conservation and governance for wetlands of international relevance. Despite the extraordinary richness in biodiversity, however, the sites enveloping the Oristano Gulf have always suffered the lack of a unified administration. Thanks to the co-funding of the MAVA Foundation, since 2017 the MEDSEA Foundation coordinates the activities of all the stakeholders involved in the Maristanis project: the Autonomous Sardinian Region, the Oristano Province, the Marine Protected Area of Sinis- Mal di Ventre Island, the 11 municipalities related to the wetlands and the FLAG “Pescando”. The MEDSEA experts have developed a strategy that with the fundamental scientific support of associations as MedPan, Plan Bleu, PAP/RAC, MedIna, Tour du Valat and Bird Life, intends to transform the economic and cultural potential of the Ramsar sites in the Oristano area into a model of balance between social and environmental needs. The first phase of the project has seen the gathering, reorganization and improvement of the knowledge concerning the Ramsar sites. Only through the creation of a solid scientific literature it is possible to identify all the interventions necessary for the protection and development of the territory. A shared awareness ties all the stakeholders in a common praxis. Knowledge and a new method of governance can at this point be implemented on the ground, where the strategies become tangible actions that are able to re-establish the harmony between human presence, labor, and the environmental frame constituted by land and water, flora and fauna. Fishing, aquaculture, agriculture, livestock, tourism and craftsmanship become places where new practices and proposal are assimilated and turned by the MEDSEA team into new projects. MEDSEA support the institutions throughout the research for funding and the projects' realization. The small circle hosting a new relation between man and environment, prosperity and beauty, gradually broadens embracing the surrounding territories and their populations, now aware and proactive subjects in a system of sustainable development that can constitute a model for other wetlands in the Mediterranean basin.

