



INTERNATIONAL NETWORK
OF MEDITERRANEAN DIET COMMUNITIES

FROM WAY OF LIFE TO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

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The International Network incorporates the Emblematic Communities that identify in the values of the Mediterranean diet (from the Greek *diaita*, or *lifestyle*) their common identity heritage, recognized by [UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity](#) on the 16 November 2010 in Nairobi, Kenya.

The Mediterranean diet Communities are:

- **Agros** (Αγρός), Region Pitsilia, Cyprus. Village of 806 inhabitants in the Troodos mountain range.
- **Brač e Hvar***, Dalmatia, Croatia. Brač is the largest island of central Dalmatia, with 13,012 inhabitants and 395 km²; Hvar is a village of 12,000 inhabitants and an area of 300 km².
- **Soría**, the capital of the province of Soría, Spain, with 39 987 inhabitants and an area of 271 km².
- **Koroni** (Coroni) town in Messinia, municipality of Pylos-Nestoros, Peloponnese, Greece, with 5,067 inhabitants and an area of 105 163 km².
- **Pollica**, Pioppi, Campania Region, Italy with 2,474 inhabitants and an area of 27.89 km², in the Cilento National Park, with 269 759 inhabitants and an area of 28,400 km².
- **Chefchaouen**, capital of the Province of Chefchaouen, in Morocco, with 54 562 inhabitants and an area of 435,000 km².
- **Tavira**, the capital of the municipality of Tavira, Algarve, Portugal, with 26 167 inhabitants and an area of 611 km².



The Emblematic Communities of Agros (Cyprus), Brač and Hvar (Croatia) and Tavira (Portugal) have been included in the list of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity of UNESCO at a later stage, during a follow-up event held in 2013 in Baku, Azerbaijan.

THE UNESCO RECOGNITION

In its declaration of recognition of the Mediterranean Diet as Intangible Heritage of Humanity, the UNESCO underlines that: *the Mediterranean diet (from the Greek diaita, or way of life) encompasses more than just food. The Mediterranean diet constitutes a set of skills, knowledge, practices and traditions ranging from the landscape to the table, including the crops, harvesting, fishing, conservation, processing, preparation and, particularly, consumption of food.*

The Mediterranean diet is characterized by a nutritional model that has remained constant over



time and space, consisting mainly of olive oil, cereals, fresh or dried fruit and vegetables, a moderate amount of fish, dairy and meat, and many condiments and spices, all accompanied by wine or infusions, always respecting beliefs of each community. It promotes social interaction, since communal meals are the cornerstone of social customs and festive events. It has given rise to a considerable body of knowledge, songs, maxims, tales and legends. The system is rooted in respect for the territory and biodiversity, and ensures the conservation and development of traditional activities and crafts linked to fishing and farming in the Mediterranean communities. Women play a particularly vital role in the transmission of expertise, as well as knowledge of rituals, traditional gestures and celebrations, and the safeguarding of techniques.

The promoter Countries, responsible for the prestigious acknowledgment (Italy, Greece, Spain, Morocco, Cyprus, Croatia and Portugal) have identified in the emblematic Communities the universal exceptional values, culturally and scientifically representative of this lifestyle, which are still today expressions and evolutionary representation of the identity values that have determined the accolade.

In these Communities the Mediterranean diet is still alive as in the past and it transmits, safeguards and celebrates its universal values. The international recognition does not represent the final goal, the end of a journey, but the necessary impulse towards the future.

The aim of the emblematic Communities, in the Mediterranean and international context, is therefore increasing the value of those elements that have been the basis of the acknowledgment, to turn them into a platform for local sustainable development. This platform is based on the enhancement of the territories as complex ecosystems, where history has left specific *genii loci*, which allow original abilities of interpretation and that are intended to be valued on the global networks.

THE NETWORK OF THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET

The Network of the Mediterranean Diet thus currently operates to facilitate and to promote territorial cooperation by creating a stable space for collaboration between the Mediterranean areas, to strengthen economic and social cohesion of the Emblematic Communities and to extend to other communities the values and sustainable territorial development strategies of the Mediterranean Diet.

The Network helps to implement the targets defined in the Decision of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee that proclaimed the Mediterranean Diet as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.



Specifically, the following objectives, set in the dossier for the recognition by UNESCO, represent the points of reference for the Network operational strategy:

- *The Mediterranean diet is a set of traditional practices, knowledge and skills handed down from generation to generation and it provides a sense of belonging and continuity of the communities, and therefore must be protected and enhanced;*
- *Its membership is aimed at giving visibility to the peculiarity of intangible cultural heritage and foster intercultural dialogue at regional and international levels;*
- *The Mediterranean diet requires a plan of transnational measures to ensure the transmission to younger generations and promote awareness of existing communities;*
- *The international acknowledgment is the result of a close collaboration between institutions and authorities of seven Countries, supported by the active participation of the communities, expressing the*

free consent between the parties, elements that need to be strengthened and shared;

- *The recognition is the result of a commitment to a transnational inventory of practices in action in the four Countries involved, to be extended to the entire Mediterranean area.*

THE INITIATIVES OF THE NETWORK

In order to achieve the commitments and aims set by the promoter Countries, the Network of Emblematic Communities of the Mediterranean Diet performs the following specific initiatives:

- it promotes and coordinates the transnational cooperation of the Emblematic Communities and their actions, in order to provide a coherent contribution to the authorities of the involved countries which promote the Mediterranean diet;
- it plans and organizes research, documentation and informative initiatives, aimed at enhancing the common awareness of the quality aspects and traditional values associated with the Mediterranean diet, in order to promote its safeguard, protection and conservation;
- it performs initiatives for the certification and registration of the Mediterranean Diet in the relevant institutions of the Mediterranean countries involved, including through the establishment of an EGTC DIETAMed between the emblematic Communities, with the support of the International “Study Centre of the Mediterranean Diet ‘Angelo Vassallo’”, identified by a common agreement as the operational structure for the research, documentation, training, information and knowledge transfer;
- it plans and implements initiatives to give visibility to the Mediterranean Diet and to propagate its values with events, conferences, actions and projects in schools and universities;
- it encourages a wider participation and groups involvement in initiatives for the promotion of the Mediterranean diet;
- it develops and promotes, in collaboration with the Mediterranean governments involved and the competent institutions, strategies for the future dissemination of the Mediterranean Diet values and the involvement of other institutional actors and associations towards a sustainable development of the territories involved.



TO KNOW MORE

<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/RL/00884>

<http://www.mediterradiet.org/>

<http://www.mediterraneandietunesco.net/>