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PROMOTING GREEN LIVING AREAS



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O 3.1 | NUDGES Action Research Agenda for 2027

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List of abbreviations

Agenda	<i>NUDGES Action Research Agenda for 2027</i>
EU	European Union
GLA	Green Living Areas
LL	Living Lab
MED	Mediterranean
NGO	non-governmental organisation
RACI table	Responsible-Accountable-Consulted-Informed table



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1. Introduction

The *NUDGES Action Research Agenda for 2027* (agenda) is a strategic output developed within the framework of the Interreg Euro-MED project NUDGES – Novel Support Tools to Mediterranean Governments Exploiting Behavioural Incentives. As one of the jointly developed strategies under the programme's GLA mission, this agenda outlines key research and policy priorities aimed at accelerating climate change mitigation and adaptation actions across Mediterranean cities.

Building on the insights from six experimental pilots implemented across the Euro-MED area, the agenda provides a forward-looking vision for integrating behavioural science, particularly nudges and cultural interventions, into local and regional climate governance. It emphasises the potential of subtle, non-coercive behavioural prompts (climate nudges) and culturally embedded practices to close the gap between environmental awareness and concrete sustainable actions among citizens.



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2. Executive summary

The agenda outlines a strategic framework for leveraging behavioural science to accelerate climate mitigation and adaptation efforts across Mediterranean cities. Developed within the Interreg Euro-MED programme, this agenda builds on the outcomes of six experimental pilots conducted in diverse socio-cultural and environmental contexts, using a multi-sensory and community-based approach.

The agenda identifies two primary domains of action:

- **fast-tracking climate action** in MED cities through the adoption of tested behavioural strategies, and
- **deepening research into the relationship between cultural policy and environmental behaviours**, recognising that Mediterranean identity, heritage, and sensory experience can be powerful levers for sustainability.

The agenda prioritises behavioural strategies that help municipalities integrate climate nudges into urban climate policies. It recommends scaling up cost-effective, non-intrusive interventions in sectors such as transportation, energy use, waste management, and sustainable food systems, tailored to the cultural and environmental specificities of the MED region.

Recognising the transformative role of culture, the agenda proposes further research into how cultural values, artistic expression, and collective identity can strengthen public engagement with sustainability goals. It calls for embedding environmental messaging into cultural policies, public art, festivals, and heritage-driven interventions.

To maximise impact, the agenda outlines a plan for replicating the most promising pilots in new urban contexts, engaging citizens through Living Labs (LLs) and participatory methods. It proposes strengthening the NUDGES Community of Interest, extending collaboration with municipalities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), artists, and educational institutions.

The document advocates for continued support from the Euro-MED Programme and other European Union (EU) and national initiatives. It highlights pathways for embedding behavioural approaches into policy, including funding recommendations, transferability plans, and integration into broader frameworks such as the European Green Deal, the Covenant of Mayors, and national adaptation strategies. Complemented by a pilot replication and community engagement agenda, this document also sets the groundwork for a potential follow-up initiative, either as a continuation of NUDGES or as part of a broader Euro-MED or EU programme. It is intended for use by policymakers, researchers, local authorities, and community leaders committed to behavioural innovation for climate resilience.



3. Strategic priorities for climate mitigation and adaptation in Mediterranean cities

Mediterranean cities face a dual urgency: they must address the increasing impacts of climate change (e.g., heatwaves, water stress, and urban flooding) and accelerate the pace of climate mitigation. The NUDGES project identifies behavioural interventions, specifically climate nudges, as an effective and underutilised tool for supporting cities in this transition. These nudges are designed to alter choice environments in subtle ways that lead individuals and communities toward more sustainable behaviours, without relying on regulation or financial incentives.

This agenda proposes a deliberate integration of nudging approaches into municipal climate strategies, aligning them with spatial planning, local energy plans, sustainable mobility frameworks, and food systems. By embedding sensorial cues, such as those targeting the senses (sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste), into urban environments and community life, cities can subtly shift everyday behaviours that contribute to energy consumption, mobility choices, and environmental impact.

A core priority is to institutionalise nudges within local governance frameworks. This includes embedding behavioural insights into policy formulation processes, building capacity within city administrations, and linking nudging initiatives with broader strategic goals such as climate neutrality and circular economy transitions. To ensure that these efforts are grounded in evidence, the agenda encourages the use of experimental methods (e.g., randomised controlled trials and field experiments) that allow cities to test, adapt, and validate the efficacy of nudging interventions in specific socio-cultural contexts across the MED region.



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3.1. Behavioural focus

- Scale up use of climate nudges in municipal policies (e.g. transport, energy use, food systems).
- Institutionalise non-regulatory mechanisms (nudges instead of new rules or incentives).
- Embed sensorial nudges (sight, touch, smell, taste, hearing) into local campaigns and infrastructure design.



Figure 1. In Madridejos, Spain, children walked along a 'sound path' to school where birdsong subtly encouraged walking instead of car use.

3.2. Policy integration

- Integrate nudging strategies into city-level climate and spatial plans.
- Align nudges with the Green Deal and national climate neutrality goals.

3.3. Evidence-based piloting

- Promote randomised field experiments across diverse MED territories to assess context-sensitive nudging efficacy.
- Publish results to inform wider replication, including the role of digital tools and data tracking.



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4. Research directions on culture–environment practices

The NUDGES pilots have demonstrated that cultural policies and practices can act as effective levers for environmental behaviour change. Building on these insights, the agenda calls for a more systematic exploration of how cultural norms, shared values, and collective experiences can drive sustainability transitions in Mediterranean cities.

Culture, understood in its broadest sense, from food traditions and public art to storytelling and local rituals, plays a powerful role in shaping how people relate to their environment. The agenda argues that fostering climate-resilient behaviour requires more than providing information or incentives; it requires emotional connection, identity-building, and community engagement. Cultural nudges offer precisely this potential, using symbols, narratives, and sensory experiences to create lasting shifts in public perception and individual habits.

A research priority for the coming years is to understand the conditions under which cultural interventions are most effective. This involves interdisciplinary collaboration among behavioural scientists, cultural institutions, urban planners, and policy designers. The agenda highlights the importance of studying intergenerational dynamics, particularly how sustainability values can be transmitted from children to adults. It also shows how cultural interventions may differ in effectiveness across diverse urban and rural MED territories.

Additionally, the agenda emphasises the importance of increasing attention to the role of participatory arts, storytelling, and heritage-based programming in reinforcing sustainability messaging. These efforts should be evaluated not only for their immediate impact on behaviour but also for their capacity to build a shared cultural framework that supports long-term ecological responsibility.



4.1 Cultural anchoring of environmental behaviours

- Use MED cultural assets (e.g. cuisine, crafts, heritage) as vehicles for environmental messaging.
- Promote cultural nudges in cooperation with creative industries and artists.



Figure 2. In Slovenia, participants in a smell-based workshop created herbal spreads and hydrolates using local plants to reflect on sustainable habits.

4.2 Youth and intergenerational transmission

- Focus on children-to-parent transfer mechanisms in school-based nudging campaigns.
- Study long-term persistence of nudging effects initiated through youth education.

4.3 Knowledge gaps

- Address the lack of empirical data on the cultural influence on sustainability habits in urban MED environments.
- Expand mixed-methods research combining psychology, anthropology, and urban planning.



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5. Pilot replication and community engagement agenda

To build on the momentum of the NUDGES pilots, the agenda outlines a structured plan for replication and expansion. The initial pilots implemented in cities across Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Slovenia and Spain demonstrated the feasibility and local resonance of both climate and cultural nudges. The next phase focuses on scaling these interventions to additional Mediterranean cities, while maintaining the context-sensitive, co-creative approach that characterised the original efforts.

The principles of adaptability, inclusivity, and local ownership will guide replication. Cities seeking to implement similar nudging strategies will be supported through tailored guidance, training modules, and access to a curated database of good practices. Emphasis will be placed on working with local stakeholders from the outset, ensuring that interventions reflect the specific social, cultural, and environmental realities of each community.

A cornerstone of this agenda is the expansion and activation of the NUDGES Community of Interest. Originally established to connect project partners and associated stakeholders, the Community will now evolve into an open, MED-wide network for knowledge sharing, joint experimentation, and policy dialogue. It will serve as a platform for exchanging tools, data, and results, while also fostering peer learning among public authorities, NGOs, researchers, artists, and citizens.

To support community engagement, the agenda proposes the development of participatory formats such as LLs, citizen science initiatives, and co-design workshops. These formats will empower residents to become active agents in shaping their urban environment and contribute to climate resilience in tangible ways. Special attention will be given to marginalised communities and young people, recognising their potential as both drivers and beneficiaries of behavioural change.



5.1 Replication priorities

- Target deprived urban areas with contextualised nudges (e.g., Pescara's Roma community).
- Replicate pilots in new MED cities, with a focus on multi-sensory design and public participation.



Figure 3. In Gabrovo, Bulgaria, a cartoon contest among youth turned textile waste into a public art conversation.

5.2 Community building

- Expand the NUDGES Community of Interest beyond the current 150+ stakeholders.
- Launch citizen science initiatives and participatory evaluations in replication sites.

5.3 Governance innovation

- Develop governance models (e.g., cooperatives, public-private partnerships, LLs, etc.) that integrate nudges into daily urban management.



5.4 Stakeholder roles and responsibilities

Effective implementation and replication of behavioural and cultural nudges requires coordination among different types of stakeholders. Municipalities are central to enabling institutional change. Researchers contribute to the design and evaluation, NGOs facilitate community engagement, and cultural actors ensure that interventions resonate with local identity.

Table 1. The RACI table below clarifies typical roles of stakeholders.

Stakeholder	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed
Local municipalities	✓	✓	✓	✓
Researchers	✓		✓	✓
NGOs / civil society	✓		✓	✓
Cultural actors	✓		✓	✓
Citizens			✓	✓
Regional authorities		✓	✓	✓

Table 1 is illustrative and should be adapted to the local context in each replication.



6. Recommendations for follow-up and funding

The final section of the agenda addresses the need for continued funding and institutional support to sustain and scale the NUDGES approach beyond the current project lifecycle. The document puts forward a clear recommendation for submitting a follow-up project, drawing on the lessons and networks established under the current programme.

Future funding should be sought under relevant EU frameworks, including the Interreg Euro-MED Programme (Mission GLA), Horizon Europe calls focused on behavioural innovation, and the Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities Mission (NetZeroCities). Additionally, national and regional governments are encouraged to integrate behavioural insights into their own environmental policies and to co-finance local replication initiatives.

To ensure the success of a successor initiative, the agenda highlights several enabling conditions. These include the development of a Transferability Plan, which will synthesise pilot learnings into actionable models for broader uptake; the preparation of a policy-oriented knowledge package to inform urban and regional authorities; and the continuation of interdisciplinary collaboration between policy, research, and community actors.

The agenda also emphasises the importance of positioning behavioural and cultural nudges as complementary rather than alternative to regulatory and economic instruments. By framing these approaches as cost-effective, citizen-friendly, and culturally embedded, the successor project can contribute to a more holistic and human-centred vision of climate action in the Mediterranean.



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6.1 *Euro-MED and EU Support*

- Seek funding, e.g. under:
 - o Euro-MED Mission GLA,
 - o NetZeroCities (link to EU 100 climate-neutral cities),
 - o WestMED Initiative for the southern MED.

6.2 *National and regional integration*

- Advocate for inclusion of nudging in national climate adaptation strategies.
- Mobilise regional authorities for intermediary scaling.

6.3 *Knowledge valorisation*

- Release research under open access licenses to boost uptake.
- Develop toolkits, training modules, and digital catalogues based on the pilot results.



7. Conclusion

The *NUDGES Action Research Agenda for 2027* presents a clear and actionable pathway for embedding behavioural and cultural interventions into the climate strategies of Mediterranean cities. By building on the lessons of pilot experiments and advancing interdisciplinary collaboration, the agenda positions climate nudges not only as effective tools for sustainability but also as accessible, citizen-centred alternatives to traditional policy mechanisms. Through targeted replication, community engagement, and strategic alignment with EU and national frameworks, NUDGES offers a scalable model for fostering climate-resilient behaviours and cultural transformation across the region.



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