

ENFORCE AND INCREASE MARINE TURTLE RESCUE CENTRES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

There are about 40 rescue centres and first-aid facilities in the Mediterranean specializing in recovering and providing veterinary treatment to injured sea turtles. Although they have an ultimate aim to reintroduce successfully rehabilitated animals to the wild, their conservation work generally operates on individual animals and not on the populations or species as a whole. Rescue centres perform two important functions: Through public involvement and fundamental research, they can inform local citizens, tourists and coastal and marine managers about the status and threats to sea turtle populations, as well as on general issues about the marine environment. Stakeholders are also able to contribute directly to research projects by contributing data such as sightings and by-catch, while experts at rescue centres also contribute to the information available on sea turtles through their research into physiology, demography, parasitology and other health-related fields.

Through emotional involvement, rescue centres have the power to influence the conscience of their visitors and thus to foster environmentally responsible behaviour.

In the 1980s, recognition of the importance of dedicated rescue facilities for marine turtles led to the establishment of the first rescue centres in the Mediterranean in Italy, by the Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn in 1982, followed by ARCHELON in Greece in 1994. Others followed, but the provision of facilities and treatments in different centres was inconsistent. Over the next two decades,

the need to standardize and regulate sea turtle rescue was recognized, resulting in the publication of guidelines for marine turtle rescue activities by the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA) of the Barcelona Convention, representing a first step toward a

Mediterranean-wide sea turtle rescue network. Development of the first registry of Mediterranean rescue centres showed a very uneven distribution, with a lack of centres in some African and Eastern countries, while other countries had several (such as Italy, which hosts more than half of the existing centres).

Rescue Centres, First Aid Stations and other facilities for recovering and providing veterinary treatment to injured sea turtles.

The initiative stemmed from Ullmann & Stachowitsch is currently managed by MEDASSET.

More information: www.medasset.org/our-projects/Sea-Turtle-Rescue-Map

