

2025 REPORT

FRANCISCAN NETWORK OF THE MEDITERRANEAN (RFMed)



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Introduction

In these difficult and complex times of history in which we find ourselves, with the increase in totalitarianism, the hardening of migration policies in Europe, widespread racism and xenophobia, the rise of ultra-conservative and supremacist political movements in the world, plus the war in Ukraine and the Palestinian genocide in Gaza and the West Bank, we see how reality is closing itself off to the Common Good of the human family.

In this 2025 ended, as the Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean, we have continued to develop – with Franciscan simplicity and humility – our RFMed Mission: to contribute to the construction of a Mediterranean Sea as a mosaic of hope; where there is space for the reception of migrants and refugees who arrive on its shores, space for intercultural and religious encounter and dialogue, as Francis of Assisi did in his time with the Sultan in Damietta; and also for the commitment to young people when it comes to being sowers and artisans of peace in their country. or places where they live and solidarity and cooperation for a complex and complicated reality such as the one we are experiencing.

That is to say, we have continued to sail in this stormy Mediterranean Sea, choosing life, recognizing the dignity of every human person with a clear intention: to be more aware that universal Fraternity is not impossible and, at the same time, to become aware that, in reality, we form a single humanity; that we are all brothers and sisters of a single family, where each one has the richness of his or her culture, faith and convictions, with his or her own voice (Fratelli Tutti n.8). We know that life subsists where there is rapprochement and encounter that generates dialogue, bonds, communion and fraternity. We know also that in each personal and collective story there is a richness, if we are able to listen, share and learn from others.

I began by saying that these are difficult times, but as St. Augustine said in his Sermon 80:8: "These are bad, difficult times, it is constantly said. Let's live well and times will be good. It is we who make times good or bad; time is what we do"

It is from these convictions that we continue to row in the Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean; convinced that, from this faith and spirituality that animates the entire Franciscan family participating in it, we will be able to contribute, in the midst of so much difficulty and despair, a path of hope; that with this Franciscan faith and spirituality we are doing our bit when it comes to making the Mediterranean a space of Encounter, Acceptance and Fraternity; where we work together for Justice and Peace, human rights, the defence of freedom and the common good of all.

So, we invite you to go through these pages of the RFMed 2025 Report; lived and carried out as a contribution to making the Mediterranean more and more a space of life, hope, welcome and fraternal encounter.

*Fr. Fausto Yudego, OFM
RFMed Committee Member*



Acknowledgements

At the heart of the Franciscan Way, we discover that the Mediterranean does not separate us but unites and sustains us. We see its meaning in the root of the word, centre of the earth. Its very name, Mediterranean, evokes its role as "heart of the earth", reminding us of its central place in our shared journey, connecting the whole world.

This is "Sister Water": humble, priceless, and pure. Like a gentle hand, it refreshes the thirst of the earth and the longing of our spirits, nourishing all those it encounters. We recognize that water knows no borders. It flows freely to where it is needed, seeking the lowest places to give life. Its soft

murmur unites communities. As we cross borders, water teaches us about our interdependence. It reminds us that protecting this vital resource is a responsibility we all share. We must cooperate to ensure that both people and the planet flourish.

As members of RFMed, we are called to be like the Mediterranean, a great baptismal font where our differences do not disappear, but merge into a unified identity. It reminds us that we are all connected in a divine cycle of grace that touches all coasts, where the cries of the poor on one shore echo like ripples on another. Being part of this network means trusting that the Spirit will guide us beyond our comfort zones into a shared vision of fraternity.

I am deeply honoured to be a part of this dynamic community. Belonging to RFMed is like witnessing the miracle of the "shared network", where our individual resources are strong enough to make the dreams of an entire region come true.

We thank those who have the courage to navigate these sometimes unpredictable waters, transforming the Mediterranean Sea into a "blue tableau". Our sea becomes a sacred place of encounter where we celebrate peace and unity, a living testimony to our mutual commitment to encounter and reconciliation.

Together, in 2025, we launched cross-border education programs, supported families affected by migration, and created spaces for interfaith dialogue that brought communities together.

At RFMed, I've found not just a community, but a family. One that shows the world how unity, cooperation, and gratitude can forge a better, more peaceful future.

As we look forward to 2026, we don't fear the depths of the ocean. We have faith and confidence in the strength of our community and in the guidance of Francis and Clare. We continue to dedicate ourselves to our shared world, filled with gratitude for the water that unites us and the Spirit that animates us.

¡Paz y bien! Salam we kheir!

Dr. Marianne Mounir, Egypt, OFS, RFMed / JPIC

Who We Are

The Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean is woven by men and women, lay and religious people, from the Franciscan family engaged in the areas of migration and refuge, dialogue/peace and youth.

The Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean (RFMed) emerged from the European Continental Meeting of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) of the Order of Friars Minor (OFM) in September 2019 in Malta, on the occasion of the eighth centenary of the embrace of St. Francis of Assisi with Sultan Malik al-Kamil. The approved areas of work were Migrants and Refugees, Dialogue-Peace, and Youth.

After the difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic, the OFM 2021 General Chapter, in its 28th mandate, asks that "The Minister General and his Definitory, in collaboration with the JPIC Office and the SGME, should continue with the implementation of the Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean."

The first step taken by the OFM General Government in 2022 is the appointment of a Coordination Committee made up of people from the Franciscan family in order to resume what has already been done. In 2023, projects and roles of each of the work areas are defined, deciding to prioritize that of migrants and refugees.

“

*May the Mediterranean cease to be a place of death
and become OIKOS, a space of life and welcome for all those
who pass through it.*

Mission, Vision and Values

Below are the mission, vision and values, which define and guide the work and objectives of the RFMed:

Mission

To contribute, through Franciscan spirituality, to the construction of the Mediterranean as a place of life, hope and fraternal encounter by service to migrants and refugees, the promotion of dialogue-peace and commitment to young people.

Vision

To be a network that facilitates and articulates with members of the Franciscan family who exercise various types of services in the Mediterranean, offering:

1. For migrants and refugees: reception and shelters, solidarity parishes, legal and social advice teams, advocacy and individual services.
2. For dialogue-peace: experiences and proposals for dialogue-peace with the collaboration of study and research centres, Franciscan presences that work

in interreligious and ecumenical dialogue, and institutions that carry out peace processes.

3. To young people: spaces for meeting and exchange, learning to welcome different visions, to dream together and to develop common projects.

Values

- Welcome
- Culture of encounter
- Accompaniment
- Dialogue
- Listening
- Justice
- Peace

RFMed Coordinating Committee

The RFMed is established through a coordinating committee, by a decree of the General Curia on July 20, 2022. The appointment of the members of this Committee was given who are in charge of implementing the RFMed.

The Committee aims to develop the following activities:

- To make known what is already being done.
- To present the Network to the Franciscan Family, Church and Civil Society.
- Interconnect with the Franciscan Family, Church and civil society.
- Schedule face-to-face meetings with the different members of the Network.
- Coordination of what is already being done.
- To dynamize fraternity processes.
- To give answers that humanize in this reality.
- Helping to create a future of life within the Mediterranean

Below we present the members of the Coordinating Committee and the members of the sub-committees by area.

a. Members



Maru Ríos
OFS Marsella (Francia)



John Luke
OFM, Rodas (Grecia)



Miriam Oyarzo
FMSC, Estambul (Turquia)



Fabio L'amour
OFM, Tetuán (Marruecos)



Francesco Zecca
OFM, Taranto (Italia)



Eunan McMullan
OFM, Ginebra (Suiza)



Marianne Mounir
OFS, El Cairo (Egipto)



Francisco Gómez
OFM, SGME-Roma



Daniel Rodríguez
OFM, JPIC Roma



Fausto Yudego
OFM, Pamplona (España)

b. Coordination committees by field

a. Migrants and Refugees Committee

- Fabio L'amour, OFM, Tetouan (Morocco)
- Fausto Yudego, OFM, Pamplona (Spain)
- Maru Ríos, OFS Marseille (France)
- Eunan McMullan, OFM, Franciscans International, Geneva (Switzerland)

Committee for Dialogue-Peace

- John Luke, OFM, Rhodes (Greece)
- Miriam Oyarzo, FMSC, Istanbul (Turkey)

Youth Committee

- Francesco Zecca, OFM, Taranto (Italy)
- Miriam Oyarzo, FMSC, Istanbul (Turkey)
- Marianne Mounir, OFS Cairo (Egypt)

RFMed Activities

a. Annual Face-to-Face Meeting of the Coordination Committee

For the third consecutive year, the Coordination Committee of the Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean meets to continue defining the identity and structure of this network. From March 31 to April 3, 2025, the third annual face-to-face meeting of the Coordination Committee of the Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean (RFMed) was held in Rhodes, Greece. There, the Network's projects were evaluated and planned in each of the three areas of work.

It was decided to hold the meeting in Rhodes, on this Mediterranean island, known as a tourist destination, but also a refuge for many migrants from Asia Minor and Africa, and thus be able to experience first-hand the work that as a network we want to support and promote in the Franciscan family of the Mediterranean.



In Rhodes there is a Franciscan fraternity belonging to the Custody of the Holy Land. This presence not only serves the island's only Catholic parish and its partner churches, but also constantly seeks to offer help to people in migratory transit. One of these actions is the monthly distribution of food to migrants and refugees on behalf of Saint Anthony.

Fr. John Luke Gregory, OFM, parish priest and guardian of the friary, recognizes the lack of institutions that assist migrants in the region. For this reason, he declares that "the little we can do is highly valued by those who need it".

During the meeting, RFMed members expressed concern about the increase in rearmament in

several European countries and the winds of war and conflict in the Mediterranean region. They also reaffirmed the value of Franciscan presences in the region and the challenge of continuing to strengthen this network to offer joint responses around three priority axes: migration, peace and youth. The figure of St. Francis of Assisi accompanied the dialogues and reflections, recalling that his mission took place in the Mediterranean in times of crusades and religious conflicts. On the basis of this memory, the friars renewed their hope that another Mediterranean is possible, and that the Franciscans can be sowers of that hope.

[You can learn more in this article.](#)





Prior to the development of the meeting, the following objectives were defined that guided the development of the agenda during the working days, the objectives were:

- To share among the members of the Committee the experience of life and service that is carried out within the Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean.
- Based on the objectives set at the last meeting in Marrakech, Morocco, evaluate the activities carried out in the three areas of the Network.
- Define the objectives, activities and program of the RFMed for the period 2025-2026.

Among the activities that took place during the meeting, it is worth highlighting the delivery of food to low-income people and refugees from the parish of the convent of the Friars Minor of the Custody of the Holy Land. This experience was enriching for the members of the RFMed committee since they were able to learn about the reality of many people who live in the city as refugees or migrants and witness the injustice of seeing that not even their basic needs can be met.

There were also joint reflection activities, such as the reflection on Laudate Deum guided by Fr. Francesco Zecca, OFM. Evaluation and discussion sessions were held in order to plan the projects

and strategy of the network for 2025-2026, both as a network and by the sub-committee in each area.

For this year, during the planning during the days of the meeting, the following objectives were set by area:

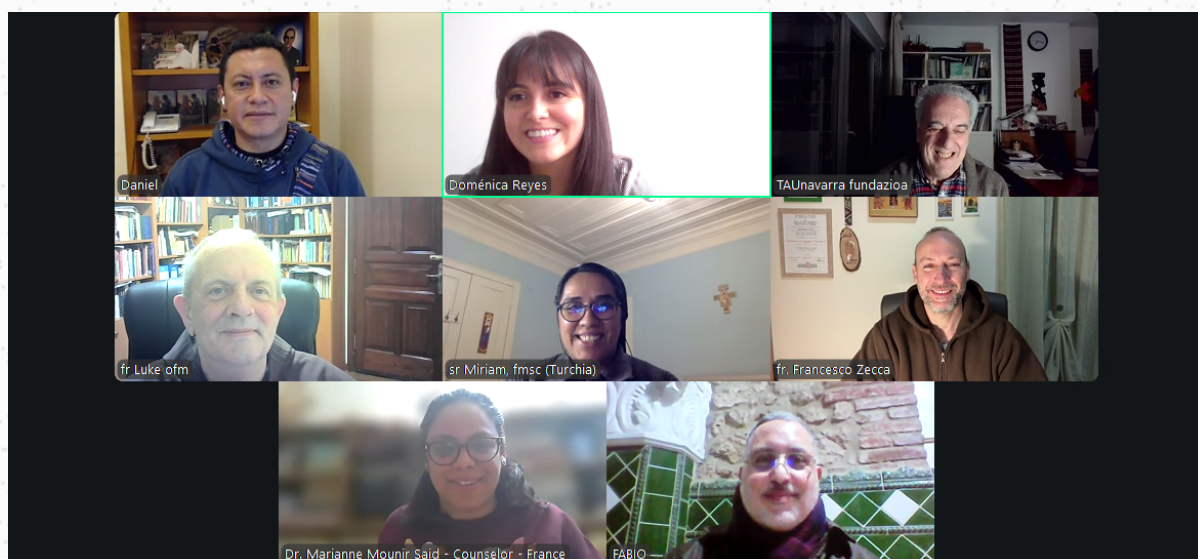
- Migrants and Refugees: To energize a network of communication and collaboration between the Franciscan Family that works directly with migration in the Mediterranean. Through mapping, an effective communication network through WhatsApp and online meetings, a plan of visits and the use of the UN organizations that work on the issue.
- Dialogue/Peace: Continue to promote the scope of Dialogue/Peace with the Franciscan family to respond to the challenges that the Mediterranean presents at this time on issues of violence, conflicts and wars. Through the rapprochement with the Franciscan family to create synergies around the themes of dialogue and peace, promotion of activities together with CONAMO, and updating and training of the members of the Committee
- Youth: To carry out cultural exchange work with young people who see the Mediterranean as a richness. Through the transformation of the Mediterranean into a great fraternity of care where young people take care of this sea, of this life.

b. Virtual Monthly Meetings of the Coordination Committee

The members of the RFMed coordinating committee have virtual meetings on a monthly basis where they share the situation of the network, follow up on the objectives and organize the work to be done. The meetings are held on Zoom, with the participation of all the members of the committee and, when necessary, external guests to discuss a specific topic.

Each month, the network's secretariat prepares a work agenda for the online meetings, which includes a follow-up of the network's overall performance and the three areas of work. Similarly, the RFMed communication plan that is managed through the website is reviewed. The following sections of this report show the activities of each area carried out during the year, which is reflected in the minutes of the monthly meetings of the coordinating committee.

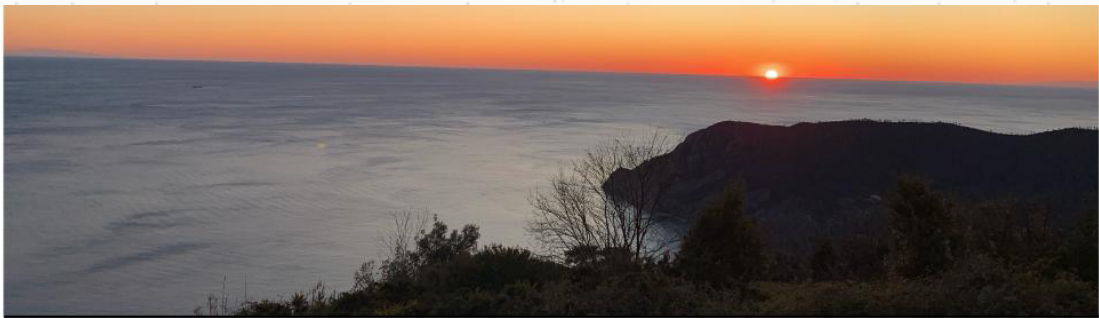
Schedule of virtual meetings held in 2025		
January 23	February 27	May 29
June 26	July 31	September 18
October 30	November 27	December 18



c. Presentation of the RFMed in various spaces

During this year, the work of the RFMed was presented in various places and spaces, which are detailed below:

- Virtual Course of Higher Education in Integral and Mediterranean Ecology, organized by the Pontifical Antonianum University of Rome. Fr. Daniel Rodríguez Blanco was in charge of the presentation conference on March 27.



RETE FRANCESCANA DEL MEDITERRANEO

“Un granello di sabbia nell'immensità del mare”.

- JPIC European Continental Meeting, from 6 to 10 October in Sarajevo, Bosnia -Herzegovina



- Meeting of the CMS (European Mediterranean Conference) in JPIC area, November 10 to 14 in Madrid.



- Like all Provinces, the Custody of the Holy Land celebrates a Chapter every three years. In all Chapters, the JPIC Commission presents its work and future projects for the next triennium. It also provides an opportunity to present and discuss the work of the Franciscan Mediterranean Network. Prior to the Chapter, a written report is submitted to the Discretorium, of which each delegate receives a copy. Many friars already know the work of the RFMed thanks to the JPIC visits made throughout the Custody. Friars in formation are especially interested in our mission with marginalized migrants and refugees. This interest can be developed and promoted.



- At the Chapter of the Mats in Assisi in 2025, where for the first time religious and lay people were invited to participate, it was possible to share with the participants the work of the Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean, where they expressed interest and pride that this care was designed to provide support and help to marginalized immigrants and refugees, guided and promoted by our Franciscan charism. The discussions provided food for thought and generated interest and support for the work of the RFMed.



- from 12 to 25 October 2025 in Istanbul, Turkey. This important event, promoted by the international Franciscan community present in the country, represents a valuable service offered to the Franciscan Family in the world, called to live and bear witness to dialogue in different cultural and religious contexts. During the course, Sr. Miriam Oyarzo, Franciscan Missionary of the Sacred Heart and member of the Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean, presented the mission of the network, illustrating its objectives, its spirit and its many activities aimed at promoting encounter, fraternity and collaboration among the peoples bordering the Mediterranean. His intervention offered the participants a concrete witness to the Franciscan commitment to dialogue, peace and the building of authentic relationships between believers of different traditions.

d. Activities by field

- **Migrants and refugees**

- **Mapping**

During this year, the work of mapping organizations that work with migrants and refugees has continued, so that more people can access help that is close to them. The map can be found on the RFMed website at this link: <https://www.franciscannetwork.eu/es/donde-estamos/>. In 2025, the following have been incorporated into the website in Spain: [Bayt al-Thaqafa Foundation](#), [ASSOCIACIÓ LOLES MEDRANO – BARCELONA \(Catalonia\)](#) and Madrid: <https://www.sercade.org/SERCambio> of the Capuchin Province. This allows for the creation of a broader network of support for migrants and refugees of the Franciscan family.



- **Online meetings of the Migrants and Refugees Group**

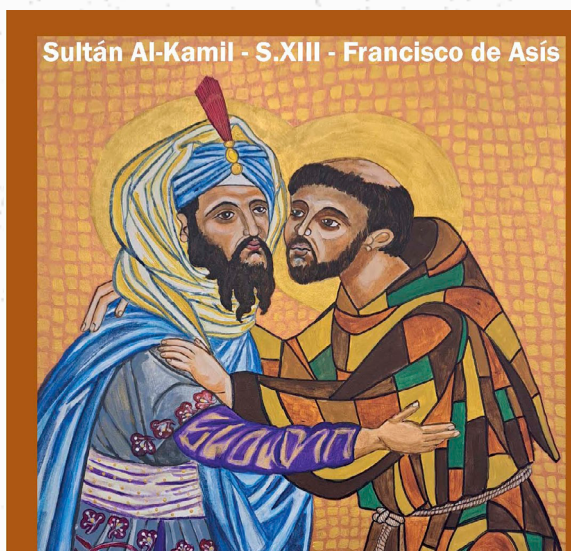
The organizational group in the field of migrants and refugees is made up of five people from the RFMed Committee and lay people from entities that work with migrants and refugees. Monthly meetings have been held throughout this year, except for August and September, to continue with the mapping and dynamize the networking of this area; to see possibilities for coordination and improvement between those who are already working with these people in the different countries of the five shores of the Mediterranean that have such diverse realities.

- **Med25 Bel Espoir**

"Seeds of encounter, dialogue and peace in the Mediterranean"

The **Med25belespoir** ("Mediterranean, beautiful hope") project was born as a continuation of the **Ecclesial Meetings of Bishops of the Mediterranean**, initiated in Bari (2021) and expanded in Marseille (2023), where, for the first time, **70 young people from the five shores of the Mediterranean** of different religions and convictions participated: Christians, Jews, Muslims and humanists. In Marseilles, four friars from the RFMed Committee actively participated, working first collectively and then sharing experiences with the bishops, in a meeting that concluded with the presence of Pope Francis. From this moment on, the Cardinal-Archbishop of Marseille was entrusted with the continuity of the work with this group of young people, which took place in Tirana and Marseille in 2024, and which in 2025 is materialized through the **Med25belespoir project**, organized in **eight stages** from March to October on board the **"School Ship for Peace in the Mediterranean"**, the **Belespoir Schooner**. Each stage welcomes **25 young people of different nationalities, cultures and religions**, with the aim of promoting **intercultural dialogue, fraternity and peace** through a maritime and fraternal experience.





The project is based on the conviction that **the Mediterranean should not only be a battlefield or a cemetery**, but a space rich in historical memory of coexistence and dialogue. Inspired by the historic encounter of **St. Francis of Assisi with the Sultan of Damietta (1219)**, the initiative seeks to promote fraternity in the face of rivalry, justice in the face of individualism and hope in the face of despair

The first stage took place from March 1 to 15, 2025, with 20 young people (20–32 years old) and two adult companions: Remy, lay person responsible for the diocese of Marseilles, and Fr. Fausto of the RFMed Committee.

From the RFMed we contribute as a sign, **the icon of the Meeting of Francis of Assisi with the Sultan in Damietta, the thirteenth century**, as a symbol of dialogue, fraternity and hope in a Mediterranean marked by conflicts and migrations, which has been on the Schooner Belespoir during its eight stages. A gesture that illuminates the vocation of the initiative, which is none other than: to promote dialogue, reconciliation and fraternity, overcoming prejudices and fostering a culture of face-to-face encounter. Thus, indicating that, as RFMed we are committed to **caring for the five shores of the Mediterranean** and supporting young people who want to be agents of peace and builders of intercultural and interreligious relationships.

The stage ended in the port of Malaga, with the sharing of experiences and learning obtained in this first stage, with the aim of contributing to the preparation of a **"white paper"** that will collect the fruits of the project and the testimony of young people as seeds of peace and dialogue in their cultural and religious contexts of the eight stages.



Participation in this first stage of Med25belespoir has confirmed to us that it is possible to generate **fraternity and dialogue** even in small environments and spaces such as those of a sailboat, working together and sharing cultures, stories and experiences. The project demonstrates that the Mediterranean can be a **space of hope and encounter**, promoting justice, peace and the dignity of every person. It confirmed that the young participants become **agents of change**, bearers of a culture of peace and solidarity in their local contexts, and that the support and participation in this type of initiatives by the RFMed is a way of generating bridges when it comes to **interreligious dialogue and education for peace in the Mediterranean**.



As RFMed, Fr. Fausto participated in the first stage, from Barcelona to Tetouan, accompanying a group of twenty young people from fourteen nationalities, representative of the five shores of the Mediterranean. Those first days marked the spirit of the entire tour: an intense coexistence where cultural, linguistic and religious diversity was not an obstacle, but a starting point.

In other words, **Med25belespoir** thus reaffirms its vocation in the Mediterranean as a space of coexistence, encounter and reconciliation, where fraternity and justice can be promoted, in response to Pope Francis' call to "be a sea of goodness, a welcoming port and a beacon of peace" in today's world.



Marseille: port of arrival and despatch

The last stage of the project concluded in **Marseille**, a symbolic city par excellence of the multiform Mediterranean. On **25 October**, after fifteen days of sailing from Naples and a stopover in Ostia, the *Bel Espoir* arrived at the port of Marseilles. Young people and companions from this last phase met there together with numerous participants from the seven previous stages, creating a human mosaic of more than a hundred young people from all over the Mediterranean.

The arrival was celebrated with a **large festival for peace** on the J4 esplanade, open to the public. Round tables, participatory workshops, outdoor activities and a stage open to cultural expressions gave visibility to the richness and diversity of the project. The Mediterranean became music, word and shared gesture.

The MED25 *Bel Espoir* also wanted to recognize the silent and constant accompaniment of the **local Churches**, the bishops of the cities visited and, in a special way, of eight monastic communities that supported the journey with their prayers: the Carmelites of Tangier; the Augustinian Sisters of Pennabilli, Sotillo and Rossano; the Sisters of the Assumption of Ain Arik; the Poor Clares of Bari and Shkodër; and the Benedictine Sisters of Lioba.

This spiritual network, invisible but real, recalled that peace is not built only with visible initiatives, but also with daily fidelity, silence and persevering hope.





One of the most significant moments of the journey took place **on October 17 in the port of Ostia, when Pope Leo XIV** visited the schooner and met with the young participants. In his words, the Pope underlined the symbolic and prophetic value of the experience:

"Today's world needs, more than words, signs and gestures that transmit hope. With the name of this ship and with your commitment, you are a true sign of hope for the Mediterranean and for the world."

The Pontiff highlighted three fundamental keys experienced throughout the journey: **constant dialogue, respectful coexistence in diversity and the commitment to be artisans of peace** in a world marked by violence and polarization.

An end that is a beginning

The MED25 Bel Espoir does not close with the arrival in Marseille. On the contrary, it opens up as a process that continues in the life of each young person, in their communities, Churches and societies. The shared experience has sown relationships, questions and commitments that are now called to bear fruit.

The message left by this journey is clear and profoundly timely: peace is possible when it is built from encounter, fraternity and common responsibility for the care of others and the world we share. In the midst of a wounded Mediterranean, the Bel Espoir recalled that hope is not an abstract idea, but a daily practice that is learned by walking – and sailing – together.

By Fausto Yudego

TAU Foundation Coordinator

Mediterranean Franciscan Network Committee (migrants/refugees)



- **Visit to Sicily and Malta**

From October 19 to 23, 2025, Fr. Fausto and Fr. Fabio, as delegates of the Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean, visited two fraternities outstanding for their work in the care and reception of migrants. The destinations were the Convent of the Friars Minor in Ispica, Sicily, and the Convent of Valletta in Malta. Our visit was aimed at learning first-hand about the projects underway, strengthening fraternal ties and exploring opportunities for collaboration to strengthen the humanitarian and pastoral mission of the RFMed that is being carried out.

- **Visit to Sicily:**

The first stage took place in Ispica, Sicily, where the delegates Friar Fausto and Friar Fabio Lamour were fraternally received in the friary of the Friars Minor of the Province of Sicily. This community has been developing its commitment to welcoming migrants in the friary itself for several years, offering space to individuals and families for periods ranging from a few months to a year, or until they manage to integrate socially and find a job, achieving economic autonomy. The days lived together with the community were a time of grace and fraternity, where we shared with simplicity daily life, prayer and service. At the same time, we were able to learn about the reality of Ispica, with its experiences of hospitality, shared work and dialogue with migrants and families received in the territory and in the friary itself.

They were able to talk with all the friars of the fraternity, those responsible for the reception of guests, learn about the resources available for this stay in the friary and observe the development of integration and assistance programs. They discovered the great dedication of the brothers and the effectiveness of their model of hospitality; which combines material support, spiritual accompaniment and guidance towards personal autonomy.

The concluding moment of our visit to Ispica was a fraternal meeting of dialogue and discernment, during which we were presented with some perspectives for the future journey, born of mutual listening and lived experience. In this meeting, the fraternity of Santa María de Jesús, based on what it has experienced, told us that it will continue to collaborate actively in the Network, offering its contribution of welcome and witness so that the Mediterranean may truly be a space of fraternity, justice and peace.

They want to continue in a network together with the other Franciscan realities that work along the routes of the Mediterranean Sea, and continue to be a space of hope and encounter, an evangelical pandokeion where those who come from afar continue to find welcome and the local community continues to discover that the Gospel continues to become flesh in the faces of the men and women on the journey.

We are confident that the Virgin Mary, Star of Evangelization, accompanies the steps of this fraternity which, like Francis of Assisi, wishes to proclaim the Gospel as the poor, with the poor and for the poor.



- **Visit to Malta**

El 21 de octubre, al anochecer llegamos al puerto. On October 21, at dusk, we arrived at the port of Valletta, where the Guardian was waiting for us to take us to the Convent, where we were welcomed very fraternally by the community. The next day, we met with Fray Dionisio Mintoff in the Community to go with him to the "John XXIII Peace Laboratory", an institution founded in 1971 by Fray Dionisio and which, since its inception, became and continues to be a benchmark of compassion, inclusion and peace on the island.

During the meeting, Fray Dionisio shared the history of the institution he founded, explaining how an old British military airfield was transformed into a space for healing and coexistence. He detailed the evolution of the project that, over five decades, has offered and continues to offer housing, education, medical care, psychosocial support, interreligious dialogue, community outreach, and environmental renewal projects.

Our visit included a tour of all its facilities, showing dormitories, common areas and activity spaces. Highlighting the comprehensive care they offer, combining physical shelter and accommodation with legal, social and cultural

orientation programmes, always seeking the promotion, integration and empowerment of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

Subsequently, Fray Fausto and Fray Fabio, presented to Fray Dionisio and his team of volunteers the Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean, its objectives, challenges and achievements, as well as the intention to collaborate closely in the future with the work they have been doing and collaborate in the strengthening of the humanitarian mission in the region, through their inclusion and participation in the RFMed. in the areas of reception of migrants and refugees and work for interreligious dialogue and peace. The exchange was close and enriching, generating dialogue and reflection on how to strengthen the Franciscan mission in favour of migrants and refugees.

The day concluded with a Eucharistic celebration in which friars, volunteers and residents participated, followed by a fraternal moment in which we shared food and conversation about the importance of networking and coordinating to give continuity and reinforce the great work they have been doing over so many years in Malta.



In conclusion, these visits help us to verify the effectiveness, commitment and humanity of the communities visited. They help us to reaffirm the need for networking and the importance of strengthening regional collaboration, the formation of brothers and sisters and the integral accompaniment of migrants and refugees.

That is, to maintain and expand the links between the different actors of the RFMed and the Franciscan Family, as well as to encourage the exchange of experiences and promote joint projects that integrate the Franciscan values of hospitality, inclusion and service to others.

- **Franciscans International's interventions on migrants in 2025**

Following a written report submitted to the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants in relation to missing migrants, Franciscans International made a written statement on the issue for the 59th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

It noted that there was no lack of concrete recommendations to improve the situation and assist migrants, and endorsed recommendations to address the following issues:

1. Prevention of the death and disappearance of migrants.
2. Search and identification of missing migrants.
3. Provision of support to affected families.
4. Justice, accountability and reparation.
5. Data and forecasting.

An oral intervention was also made at the 59th session of the Interactive Dialogue, which included not only missing migrants in the Mediterranean, but also the situation in the Darien Gap, on which the Special Rapporteur had also published a report. (Franciscans International's Americas coordinator delivered this statement.)



In addition, Franciscans International used the Universal Periodic Review mechanism for three countries to make recommendations, inter alia, to improve the situation of migrants in Italy, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.

With regard to the first two countries, the recommendations reflecting those of Franciscans International to improve the integration of migrants into Italian society and to improve the accommodation and services available to migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina were accepted by these countries and their reviews were adopted at the end of the 59th session. (Comment by the Coordinator for Europe on the adoption of the Universal Periodic Review of Bosnia and Herzegovina).



As far as Croatia is concerned, Franciscans International invited a Croatian friar to address Member States in the sessions leading up to the August 2025 meeting, both in the room and in one-on-one meetings with their diplomatic representatives. Franciscans International secured Mexico's support for its recommendations to:

1. Ensure access for NGOs to migrant reception and detention centres to ensure that they are provided with independent supervision, legal assistance and psychosocial support.
2. Restructure the management of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund to help NGOs provide stable and long-term support to migrants and asylum seekers.

A response to Croatia's recommendation is awaited.

(Photo of Fr. Benjamin Milkovic ofm presenting the member states at the Palais des Nations).



*By Fr. Eunan McMullan, OFM
Franciscans International*

- **Dialogue-Peace**

As members of the Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean, also known as RFMed, throughout 2025 we have focused on Dialogue and Peace as one of its three fundamental pillars, along with migration and youth. Our mission is to transform the Mediterranean from a region in conflict into a "shared home" or OIKOS, through intercultural and interreligious cooperation.

- **Key activities**

Interreligious and Ecumenical Dialogue: Collaboration with study centres and research institutions to offer experiences and proposals for dialogue and peace. This includes active participation in interfaith events, such as those held following the 2025 papal visit to Marseille, Bosnia, Rhodes and Turkey.

Conflict Mediation Advocacy: Leveraging the network to urge diplomacy in the face of military escalation. This includes joint statements through the Franciscan Action Network and Franciscans International to address current regional tensions and the rearmament of European countries.

Strategic Mapping: Continuous mapping of Franciscan entities working for peace and dialogue in the Mediterranean to facilitate better coordination and resource sharing.

Pilgrimages for Peacebuilding: Organization of events, such as the Pilgrimage of Peace and Justice to Assisi (April 22-29, 2026), to deepen the commitment to evangelical nonviolence and community building.

Educational Outreach: Organization of seminars and workshops aimed at dismantling stereotypes and promoting empathy among young people, parishes, seminaries and schools.

Cultural Collaborations: Participation in broader regional initiatives, such as the Mediterranean Capitals of Culture and Dialogue 2025 (Matera, Italy, and Tetouan, Morocco) to promote shared cultural narratives.

Institutional Objectives

Networks: To serve as a bridge between the Franciscan Family, civil society and the Church: to overcome ideological radicalization; Human Rights Advocacy; and collaboration with the UN through Franciscans International to bring the voices of people affected by regional violence to global platforms.

Theological Foundation: Inspired by St. Francis' meeting with Sultan Malik al-Kamil in 1219 to promote a culture of inclusion and the language of beauty and hospitality.

By John Luke, OFM

Friary of the Friars Minor of the Custody of the Holy Land, Rhodes-Greece



Youth

- **Second edition of the Summer School 2025 - DIALOGUE EXCHANGES: FRATERNAL CITIES FOR PEACE**



Castel Gandolfo, 24-30 July 2025

OIKOS Mediterranean, in collaboration with the Pontifical University Antonianum, the Sophia University Institute, Fordham University, IberoJur and Comunione e Diritto, has promoted the second edition of the Summer School of Integral Ecology, a high-level training program aimed at young academics, researchers and professionals interested in the challenges of sustainable development from the perspective of Integral Ecology. 50 participants including students and teachers from the United States, Brazil and the Mediterranean.



In this Summer School, it was proposed to create an interdisciplinary space for research and debate, with the aim of analysing and rethinking contemporary cities as places of peace, inclusion and sustainability. Through a scientific and applied approach, the participants were guided by internationally renowned experts in an intensive training course, articulated in classes, workshops, design activities and meetings with relevant witnesses.

The summer school concluded with the signing of the Castel Gandolfo pact, to create a network of twinned cities for peace, with the presence of the honourable Dario Nardella, who accompanied the debate on the ways of collaboration between cities. Several administrations participated and signed the pact:

Maurizio Carta (Palermo)

Paolo La Greca (Catania)

Giuseppina Iemma (Catanzaro)

Laura Lieto (Naples, remotely)

Pierre Savelli (Bastia)

Mattea Lacave

Paolo Malara (Reggio Calabria)

Jihad Khater (Kherbet Kanafar, remotely)

Ahmet Aras e Erhan Ayaz (Mugla)

Mustafa Osman Turan (Istanbul)



By Fr. Francesco Zecca, OFM



• Conference and Visit to Egypt

September 28-20, 2025

In the magnificent setting of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, the event **"The song of unity in diversity. The diplomacy of cultures, cities and the role of the professions for care, peace and the common good in the Mediterranean"**, promoted by OIKOS Mediterranean, the Pontifical University Antonianum and the Arab Province of Egypt of the Friars Minor, on the occasion of the VIII Centenary of the Canticle of the Creatures.

The meeting represented a moment of great symbolic and cultural value, in which the Mediterranean was interpreted not only as a geographical space, but also as a spiritual, political and anthropological horizon.

The day opened with institutional greetings from Giuseppe Papalia, Consul of the Italian Embassy in the Arab Republic of Egypt, Fr. Filippo Faragalla, Minister Provincial of Egypt, and Msgr. Claudio Lurati, Apostolic Vicar of Alexandria in Egypt, moderated by Prof. Paolo Cancelli.





The first session, entitled **"To exist is to coexist"**, offered a philosophical and theological reading of the theme of Mediterranean coexistence and reciprocity, thanks to the contributions of Professor Andrea Bizzozero, Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy at the Pontifical University Antonianum, and Dr. Michael Medhat, Professor of Medieval Philosophy at the University of Helwan.

The second session, **"Paths and processes of Mediterranean fraternity"**, delved into the role of the professions, diplomacy and the Franciscan charism as instruments to build bridges between cultures and cities, through a round table in which Professor Fabrizio Lobasso, Fr. Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General, Fr. Francesco Zecca, lawyer Giampaolo Di Marco and Rana Hamada participated.

The meeting was configured as an authentic space for exchange between different visions, experiences and languages, united by the conviction that the Mediterranean today represents one of the most strategic and fragile places in the contemporary world, but also a frontier of hope. A place where care, the intelligence of relationships and the strength of thought can generate new forms of diplomacy and the common good.

On the afternoon of the 29th, thanks to a group of young Egyptians, the first **OIKOS Hub** came to life: **the OIKOS Mediterranean Egypt Hub**. A true living hub, a laboratory in which ideas, people and cultures meet to build a more just, sustainable and humane future, in full coherence with the paradigm of integral ecology and cultural diplomacy.

By Fr. Francesco Zecca, OFM



- **Mediterranean Exchanges: Third Euro-Mediterranean Meeting on Integral Ecology**

Taranto, 20-22 November 2025

The Third Euro-Mediterranean Meeting of Integral Ecology was held in Taranto from 20 to 22 November 2025 and promoted by Oikos Mediterranean, the Centre for Integral Ecology of the Mediterranean, and with the sponsorship of the Taranto City Council, the Chamber of Commerce of Brindisi-Taranto, AUEED, as well as the scientific sponsorship of the Pontifical University Antonianum, the Ionian Department of the University of Bari Aldo Moro, APRI international, the Department of Liberal Professions and the DiTEIM Department of CUIRIF, and the G. Paisiello State Conservatory.

It was a meeting that, also in this edition, has been confirmed as one of the main spaces for debate on the future of the Mediterranean, thanks to the participation of institutions, academics, professionals and civil entities from different countries. The initiative has proposed a programme full of moments of dialogue and reflection, with the aim of reinforcing a shared vision of development based on cooperation between territories, training, social innovation and responsibility towards communities.

In addition, the **second HUB of integral ecology** has been created with the selection of five projects by groups of young people.

By Fr. Francesco Zecca, OFM

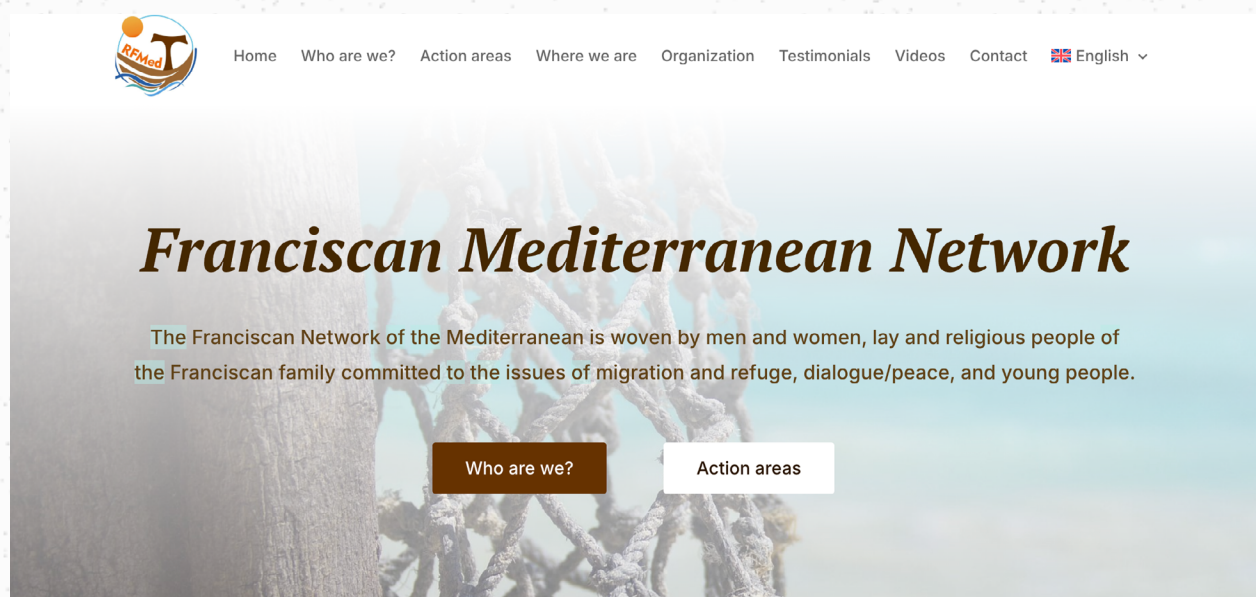
a. Communication

- **Website**

During 2025, the official website of the RFMed es FranciscanNetwork.eu, which is available in English, Spanish and Italian, has remained active and constantly updated. This site is the official medium where information, news and updates of the network are shared, and you can find a map with information on the presence of the network in the Mediterranean, of Franciscans who carry out actions and efforts with migrants and refugees, on issues of dialogue-peace; and with young people.

The maintenance and updating of the website are allocated to the coordinating committee of the network and the secretariat, additionally, any member of the network is welcome to send information or news to the website. News, stories and testimonies of people who make up the RFMed are regularly uploaded.

This year, two new sections were added to the website: Testimonies and Videos which seek to make visible the different realities of the Mediterranean



Acknowledgements

As we draw to a close the year 2025 and begin the year, we commemorate the 800th anniversary of the passing of St. Francis, a figure whose life deeply inspired countless people to seek peace, justice, compassion, and care for our Common Home.

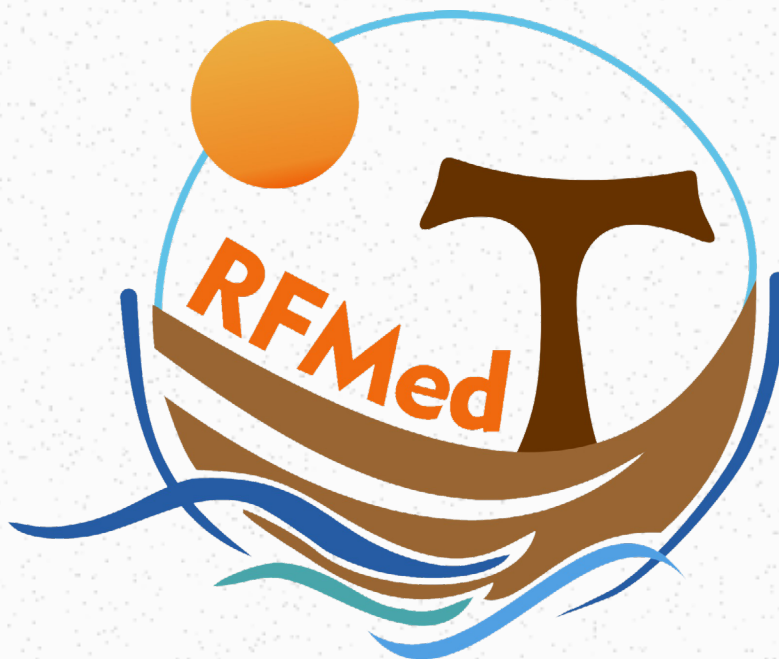
As we reflect on his legacy, we express our sincere gratitude to all our brothers and sisters who have supported the Mediterranean Franciscan Network and its unwavering commitment to the principles of solidarity and love in a world ravaged by conflict and division.

The work of the Franciscan Mediterranean Network is a testament to the enduring spirit of St. Francis. Through tireless efforts, the Network strives to promote and serve refugees and migrants, offering support and shelter to vulnerable and marginalized people. At a time when the plight of these people often goes unnoticed, the Network stands as a beacon of hope and a catalyst for dialogue, promoting understanding and harmony between diverse communities. Furthermore, it is through the focus on youth that the true transformative power of St. Francis' teachings is realized and continued. Our young people, imbued with the virtues of compassion and empathy, are cultivating their potential to become agents of change. By engaging and empowering them, the Franciscan Mediterranean Network cultivates a generation that carries forward the mission of peace and justice, as well as the care of the Common Home. They embody the essence of St. Francis, reaching out to those in need and the spirit of fraternity that transcends the barriers that too often divide us.

As we acknowledge the support of the Franciscan Mediterranean Network, let us also commit to cultivating the seeds of change in our communities. May we all be inspired to act in kindness and courage, following in the footsteps of St. Francis, as we strive to create a world characterized by love, understanding, and unity. Together, we can forge paths of hope that lead to reconciliation and peace.

Pax et Bonum: Peace and Good!

*Fr John Luke Gregory, OFM
Custody of the Holy Land, Rhodes-Greece*



Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean, 2025

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