

WE ARE THE WORLD: MED DAY 2024





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World Med Day is a celebration of the Mediterranean region, its diverse cultures, and its critical role in shaping history and the modern world. Observed annually on November 28th, this day shines a light on the unique challenges and opportunities facing Mediterranean countries. From environmental concerns like marine pollution to the preservation of cultural heritage, World Med Day calls for collaborative efforts to protect the Mediterranean as a shared resource and legacy.

The day is not just about addressing problems—it is a celebration of unity, action, and shared responsibility. Through education, volunteerism, and intercultural exchange, individuals and organizations across the region and beyond work toward a sustainable, inclusive future.

This issue of "Youth Telegraph" showcases inspiring stories of volunteers making a difference, explores the deep connections between Mediterranean cultures, and invites you to reflect on your role in protecting this incredible region.

Whether you're an activist, educator, student, or someone passionate about the Mediterranean, this day is for you. Together, we can build a stronger, more united Mediterranean community.



**UNITING CULTURES.
MEDITERRANEAN MOSAIC:
CELEBRATING DIVERSITY AND UNITY**





The Mediterranean Sea connects three continents—Europe, Africa, and Asia—serving as a historic hub for trade, migration, and cultural exchange. Its maritime routes have facilitated the movement of goods, people, and ideas for centuries, creating shared traditions and interwoven histories.

Despite their diversity, Mediterranean countries share commonalities. Agriculture is a cornerstone, focusing on vineyards, wheat, olive trees, and citrus fruits, which shape the renowned Mediterranean diet of olive oil, fresh fish, cereals, vegetables, fruits, and wine. Beyond food, the Mediterranean has long been a center of intellectual exchange, spreading the works of thinkers like Aristotle and Plato across its shores.

At the same time, the region's diversity is striking. Southern Europe speaks Romance and Greek languages, North African countries primarily use Arabic with French influences in the Maghreb, and Eastern Mediterranean nations feature languages like Armenian and Turkish.

Today, the Mediterranean remains a hub of connection. The designation celebrated Mediterranean identity through cultural events and marked the opening of the Mucem (Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations), dedicated to the region's enduring cultural exchange.

The Mediterranean is more than a sea—it is a shared legacy of diversity and unity, inspiring collaboration and mutual respect among its people.



The Mediterranean has long been a crossroads of Europe, Africa, and Asia. Ancient trade routes and empires spread goods, ideas, and religions, shaping the region's shared history. As the birthplace of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, it remains central to global culture, with its influence visible today in traditions, language, and art.

Poland, though far from the Mediterranean coast, has deep historical ties to the region. The Amber Road connected Polish amber to Roman markets, while Mediterranean goods like wine and spices enriched Polish life. The Renaissance further strengthened these connections, with Queen Bona Sforza bringing Italian cultural traditions to Poland, influencing cuisine, court life, and architecture. Scholars like Copernicus, who studied in Italy, symbolized the intellectual exchange between Poland and the Mediterranean, fostering a flow of knowledge that continues to inspire.

This shared heritage of exchange highlights the Mediterranean's role as a unifying force, even beyond its shores. Today, these connections remind us of the importance of intercultural understanding in addressing global challenges, from migration to sustainability. By embracing shared values and learning from one another, we can honor the Mediterranean's legacy of unity through diversity.



STORIES FROM THE MED: VOLUNTEERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE



From France to Tunisia...



... from Russia to Turkey





As an Albanian from the Balkans, being part of the Mediterranean program deeply connected me to my roots. The Mediterranean is a place where people from all backgrounds come together, and I wanted to contribute to that sense of unity. Working with children also inspired me, as their joy and happiness remind me that I can make a real difference in the world.

One of the most memorable moments for me was seeing the children smile. It's amazing how a smile can transcend language barriers, and in that moment, I felt a deep sense of shared emotion with everyone around me. It showed me that no matter where we come from, we all share the same feelings of joy and connection. That moment will always stay with me.

Volunteering has given me a deeper appreciation for how the Mediterranean unites so many diverse cultures, including those in the Balkans.

Every country has its own traditions, but the common bond of the sea connects us all. This experience has made me proud of my identity and allowed me to learn from the rich cultural tapestry that surrounds the Mediterranean.

One of the challenges was navigating cultural differences, especially when working with people who have different ways of thinking. At times, finding common ground was difficult. However, I learned that when we focused on our shared goal—working together for the children—it became easier to understand one another. Smiles, teamwork, and shared moments of joy helped bridge many gaps.

Volunteering has changed my perspective on life. It has made me more open-minded and appreciative of people from different backgrounds, which have positively impacted both my personal and professional life.





As a teacher from Russia, I've always believed in the power of education to bring people together. Volunteering for World Med Day felt like the perfect opportunity to connect with diverse cultures in the Mediterranean while promoting unity and shared learning among young minds.

One unforgettable moment was organizing a cultural exchange event with volunteers from across the Mediterranean. Watching children from different backgrounds bond over shared activities and realizing their common ground was powerful. It reminded me that despite differences, the joy of learning and friendship unites us all.

Volunteering helped me see the Mediterranean as a tapestry of unique traditions, languages, and histories, all woven together by a shared past. Though each country is distinct, the values of community and connection are universal, and this has broadened my perspective on cultural diversity. Adapting to different teaching methods from various countries was challenging at first. However, by being open-minded and collaborating with fellow volunteers, we found ways to blend our approaches and offer the best learning experiences for the children.

I believe that fostering understanding among the children is my greatest contribution. By showing them that despite our differences, we share values of respect and friendship, I hope to inspire a sense of unity that transcends borders.

This experience has made me more open-minded and empathetic. It's strengthened my teaching approach and made me more passionate about promoting cultural exchange. Volunteering has taught me valuable skills in communication, teamwork, and adaptability that I carry into both my personal and professional life.



Tunisia, with its deep-rooted history as the heart of the Carthaginian empire, has always been a cultural bridge linking Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. This unique blend of influences shapes Tunisia's vibrant traditions, from its music and cuisine to its language, making it an essential part of the Mediterranean's shared identity.

Linguistically, Tunisian Arabic incorporates French, Italian, and Berber influences, showcasing centuries of trade and colonization. Traditions such as malouf music, derived from Andalusian Spain, and intricate ceramics highlight Tunisia's integration into the broader Mediterranean cultural tapestry. These elements underline Tunisia's role as a bridge and vital contributor to the region's shared identity.

Celebrating Mediterranean Day on November 28th was a moment of pride for me. The event brought together 43 countries, uniting us through music, joy, and mutual respect. As a volunteer, it was uplifting to see the energy and passion of my peers as they represented their cultures and contributed to the celebration.

Volunteering has had a profound impact on me, enhancing my leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills. It's taught me the importance of cultural sensitivity, teamwork, and resilience, while boosting my confidence and expanding my professional network for the future.



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On November 28th, we celebrated the Mediterranean Day, also known as the International Day of the Mediterranean, bringing together 43 nations. This day honors our shared identity, heritage, and the deep connection we have with the Mediterranean region.

Our organization, System and Generation, was proud to be part of the third edition of this celebration, supported by the Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF).

The event went beyond music, focusing on connecting people, fostering friendships, and promoting intercultural dialogue.

Volunteers played a vital role, showcasing their talents through music, dance, and engaging with children at the Turkish-American Association kindergarten. This celebration highlighted the beauty of cultural diversity and the power of unity, leaving lasting memories for all involved.



SHAPING OPEN MINDS: HOW EARLY EDUCATION BUILDS A MULTICULTURAL FUTURE



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How does your kindergarten incorporate the values of multiculturalism and Mediterranean unity?

At our preschool, we proudly embrace multiculturalism, especially through events like Mediterranean Day. By collaborating with System and Generation and their amazing volunteers, we create an environment where cultural diversity thrives. The volunteers introduce their traditions, speak both English and Turkish with the kids, and build meaningful connections. On Mediterranean Day, seeing children and volunteers perform together on stage truly embodies multiculturalism in action.

What role do you see early education playing in fostering intercultural understanding?

Early childhood is the foundation of life. By the age of six, much of a person's worldview and character is formed. When we expose children to different cultures and languages at this stage, they become more open-minded and accepting. For instance, through projects like "Say Hello to the World", our children connected with preschoolers from other countries online. These interactions helped us earn the title of a "tolerance preschool," which we are incredibly proud of.

How do events like World Med Day enrich children's learning experiences?

Mediterranean Day was unforgettable for the kids. Although shy at first, they quickly embraced the experience. Performing songs in different languages alongside volunteers taught them so much about other cultures. The rehearsals and preparations leading up to the event were just as impactful—they learned about cultural differences and similarities. It was a joyful experience they'll carry with them forever.

How did parents react to these interactions?

The parents loved it! They were so supportive and even gave special permissions for their children to be part of video recordings and social media posts. It meant a lot to see their enthusiasm and trust in this initiative.



"At this age, children are like sponges—they absorb everything, including the beauty of different cultures. Seeing them sing in multiple languages alongside volunteers from around the world was unforgettable. It's these small moments that open their minds and shape their future as truly global citizens."



Can you share a unique story about how the children or teachers embraced cultural diversity?

One moment really touched me. I was walking through the school and greeted a group of girls, saying, "Hello, girls!" One of them proudly corrected me, saying, "We are not girls, we are the children!" It was something they had learned from a song during Mediterranean Day preparations. Moments like these show how deeply these experiences resonate with them.

What's the biggest takeaway for children when they interact with volunteers from different countries?

They gain so much—from cultural awareness to improving their English skills. As an English-focused preschool, it's crucial for the kids to hear different accents and engage with diverse speakers. These interactions encourage them to speak confidently in English while fostering curiosity and respect for other cultures.

Do you plan to organize similar events with volunteers in the future?

Absolutely! I'd love to expand on these ideas. Perhaps instead of songs, volunteers could teach their childhood games, and our kids could share traditional Turkish games. It's always been on my mind to create more opportunities for cultural exchange, and with your support, I know we can make it happen.

Thank you for sharing your insights, Mrs. Senem. Your passion for fostering cultural understanding is inspiring.

Thank you, and thanks to your team for bringing so much love and effort to this journey. It truly means the world to us!





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How do you introduce Mediterranean culture and diversity into your lessons?

In our education program we have priority for giving awareness about differences. In this condition teaching different cultures is a must for us. We regularly choose a country in monthly basis and investigate different cultures. This is how we welcome Mediterranean culture in our classroom habitat. Also as one of Med-country we usually emphasize of our Mediterranean side of our culture.

What are some of the most rewarding moments you've experienced working with kids in such a multicultural environment?

Welcoming a multicultural experience in our school led a way that our kids having knowledge and awareness about cultures. Also different languages, different daily habits being observed by our kids. This gave them incredible curiosity. Especially as time goes by, "Why haven't our guests arrived yet?" I started to hear these questions frequently. They had learned the coming days on their own and were following them. And they were quite sad when Pablo left. Even though they did not speak the same languages in their hearts, they found a beautiful place.

What does World Med Day mean to you and your family?

Even though we have a Mediterranean culture, we celebrated it for the first time. This first experience was a good first impression for us on Mediterranean Day.

How has your child benefited from being in a multicultural educational environment?

We definitely think it is beneficial to respect and tolerate differences. We also believe that it has good effects on language development and social development.

What values or lessons about diversity do you hope your child takes away from this experience?

What I want my child to gain from these experiences is to take responsibility in group work, respect differences, and support his ability to follow the rules.

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What is the largest sea in the Mediterranean region?

- a) Adriatic Sea
- b) Aegean Sea
- c) Mediterranean Sea
- d) Ionian Sea

Which Mediterranean country is famous for flamenco dancing and bullfighting?

- a) Spain
- b) Italy
- c) Greece
- d) Tunisia

What is the name of the famous architectural landmark in Turkey that bridges Europe and Asia?

- a) Hagia Sophia
- b) Bosphorus Bridge
- c) Blue Mosque
- d) Topkapi Palace

Which Mediterranean country is known for its olive oil production and ancient ruins of Carthage?

- a) Italy
- b) Tunisia
- c) Albania
- d) France

What Mediterranean dish is made with chickpeas and is popular in many countries of the region?

- a) Tapas
- b) Hummus
- c) Paella
- d) Tzatziki

Which Mediterranean country is famous for its colorful ceramics and mosaics?

- a) Tunisia
- b) Turkey
- c) Spain
- d) Albania

What natural phenomenon has shaped many of the Mediterranean's coastlines?

- a) Volcanoes
- b) Earthquakes
- c) Floods
- d) Tornadoes

Answers:
c,a,b,b,a,a





As we reflect on the success of World Med Day, it's clear that the celebration goes beyond just a one-day event; it's a catalyst for long-term collaboration and understanding between Mediterranean nations. This annual occasion reminds us of the importance of unity in diversity, bringing together countries that, though varied in culture, language, and traditions, share a deep, collective history and a common future.

Looking ahead, the future of the Mediterranean region lies in building stronger bridges across borders—bridges of cooperation, dialogue, and mutual respect. Volunteers, like the ones who helped bring this year's celebrations to life, play a critical role in fostering these connections. Their dedication not only enhances intercultural understanding but also sparks lasting partnerships that extend well beyond World Med Day. In a world increasingly interconnected yet divided, the Mediterranean remains a beacon of how people, organizations, and nations can work together for the greater good.

By supporting and expanding volunteer programs, encouraging education and exchange, and prioritizing shared goals like environmental sustainability and cultural preservation, we can ensure that the Mediterranean region continues to thrive as a model of unity and cooperation. Volunteers, young and old, continue to be at the heart of this mission, helping to build a Mediterranean community that is more connected, resilient, and inclusive.

As we move beyond the celebrations of World Med Day, let us carry forward the spirit of collaboration and look to the future with optimism, knowing that each small action and every volunteer's contribution plays a part in building a more harmonious Mediterranean for generations to come. Together, we can continue to bridge the gaps and create a future where the Mediterranean's shared heritage is celebrated and preserved for all.



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