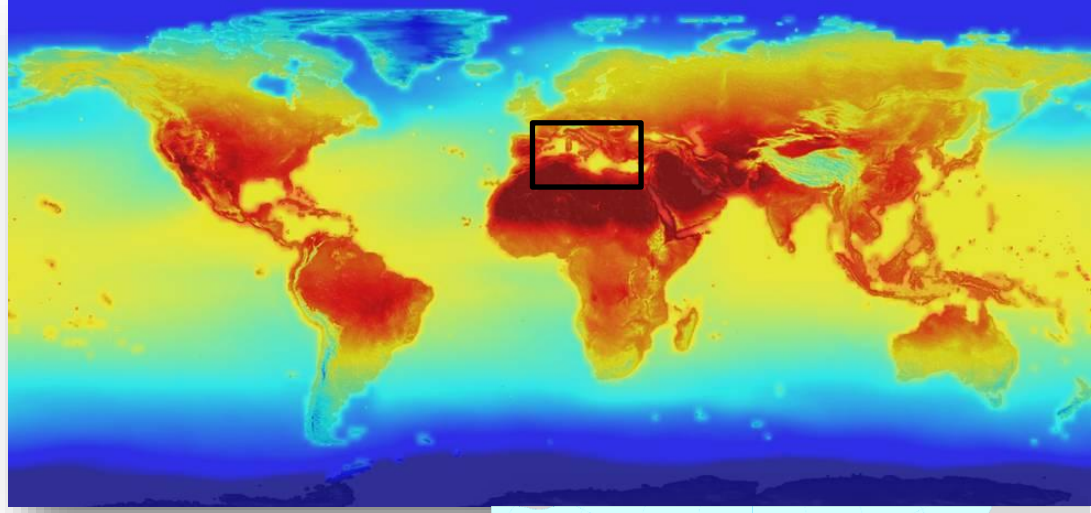
# The Messina Community Foundation

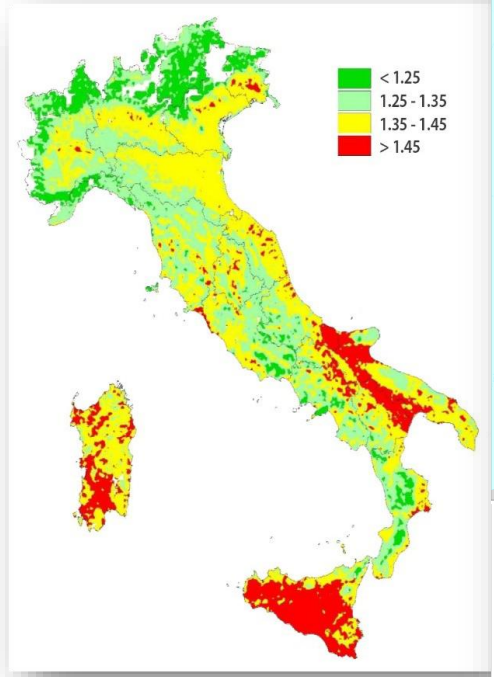
FONDAZIONE
MeSSInA
ENTE FILANTROPICO

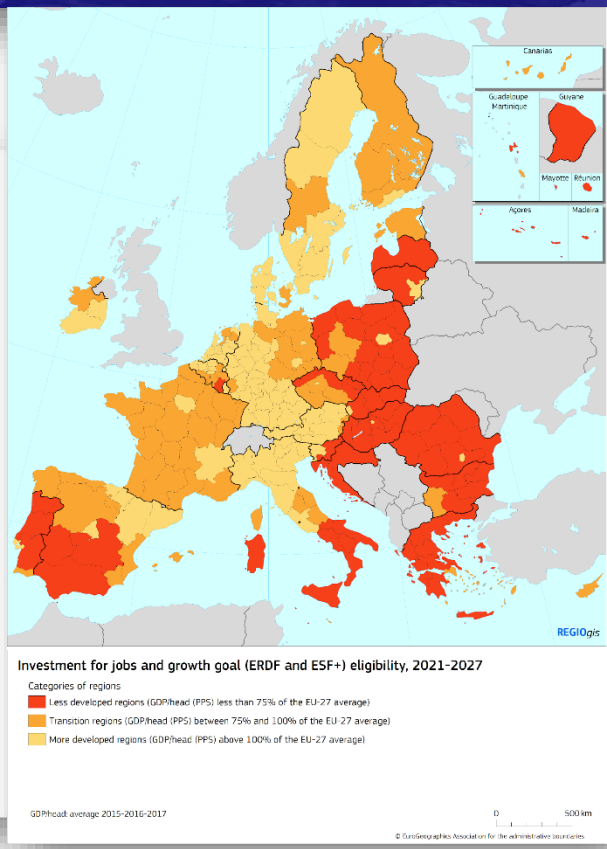
# The context

- The **Mediterranean Sea** is a real **'hotspot' of climate change** and its effects: rising temperatures and rising seas in this area are higher than on a global scale.
- **Sicily**, being at the core of the Mediterranean, is facing the strong impacts of climate change: more than **70% of its territory is at risk of desertification**.
- At the same time, Sicily is listed among the **“less developed regions” in the EU**: it has one of the highest unemployment rates in Europe, 22.5% of families live below relative poverty line and 19.2% of the economy is black or illegal.



*Risk of desertification*



# Fondazione MeSSInA

FONDAZIONE MeSSInA ENTE FILANTROPICO

- The MeSSInA Foundation is a **non-for-profit Community Foundation** created in 2010 in Messina (Sicily), but it traces its origins in the civic anti-mafia movement in the '90s.
- It was created by a group of highly diversified social economy organizations with the objective **to promote social justice and sustainable development** by designing and experimenting new **socio-economic policies** in marginalized communities.
- This **ecosystemic approach** is fundamental to properly address the **complexity and multidimensionality** of poverty and inequality of the local context.
- The Foundation works creating fruitful interconnections across several sectors, breaking knowledge silos, and **has built a wide social economy cluster** made of foundations, social enterprises, associations, etc., which is active in several sectors (energy, social mediation, urban regeneration, production, etc.) and communities throughout Sicily.

EUROPEAN CLUSTER COLLABORATION PLATFORM

# Financial ecosystem

- The Foundation brings **systemic change by generating, co-generating, re-generating and organizing territorial resources** in innovative ways, enhancing the opportunities of the territory.
- The Foundation has set up a **social finance system** supporting the delivery of its local development policies. It acts as a **catalyst**, structuring financial relationships and guiding resource flows in ways that benefit the broader ecosystem:
  - ✓ the Foundation itself has offered **direct grants** for about 6 million € in 10 years and in just 2023 had **equity investments** in social economy enterprises for about 1.1 million €. The total assets are about 17M€.
  - ✓ The cluster has also **leveraged additional private and public funding** for local communities, blending philanthropic, public, private, and EU funds (€30M mobilized).
  - ✓ the Foundation has co-founded **a microcredit institution**, which has disbursed so far 1.4 million € through 88 microloans, and an **Asset Management Company** which is managing 2 impact investing funds (about 70 M€ totally).
  - ✓ The sustainable development policies implemented by the cluster include **other sorts of "disbursements"** which have also a financial effect. For instance, the Foundation has invested in 2010 in a wide solar panel plant, installed on the roofs of several families in Messina, which are receiving for free the electricity produced. This implies a relevant **saving in terms of electricity costs**, which might be estimated, totally, in around 200.000€ every year and at the same time the plant is generating for 20 years **an income for the Foundation** of about 300.000€ per year.

# Roccavaldina

- Roccavaldina is a small historic village of about 1,000 inhabitants in an inland area of the Messina province, facing the typical challenges of marginalized remote villages: **depopulation, lack of economic opportunity, emigration of young people, etc.**
- The Foundation was approached by the Municipality to develop **a strategy for the area's revitalization**
- The Foundation launched a process to co-design the strategy, involving the community and mobilizing all external resources that could contribute expertise, funding, and ideas.
- **A strategic plan for local sustainable development was drafted in 2022**, which chose as strategic assets: valorisation of agricultural supply chains, energy transition, sustainable tourism, urban regeneration, and attraction of talents.

# Actions

- **redevelopment of the abandoned industrial area** for the creation of a factory **producing bioplastics** from local agro-food waste (Beer Spent Grain, olive pomace, coffee silverskin, etc.).

- Installation of a 92-kW rooftop solar power system (integrating a land art piece) that serves as the heart of a **Renewable Energy Community**

- **Workshops and educational programs** on the circular economy and the ecological transition for local schools, engaging external designers

- Attraction and hosting of **new startups and innovative businesses** in the regenerated industrial area (3D manufacturing, pasta makers using heirloom grains), creating a dynamic ecosystem

- **Additional actions for** the regeneration of the area: reforestation, restoration of heritage sites, promotion of sustainable tourism, etc.

*Carbon positive community + green job opportunities for local youth and vulnerable people*

# Funding

LIFE RESTART — EU FUNDS

Comune di Roccavaldina
Ministero della Cultura — NATIONAL PUBLIC FUNDS

Fondazione MeSSInA
Fondazione con il Sud
Fondazione Cattolica
Fondazione Horcynus Orca
Enel nel Cuore
Fondo Beneficenza di Intesa San Paolo
Impresa Sociale Con i Bambini
Casina FAFA — PHILANTROPIC FUNDS

Intesa San Paolo
Banca popolare Etica — BANKS

CFI
Giordano dell'Amore
**SEFEA Impact** — IMPACT INVESTORS

**MECC Impresa Sociale** — MICROFINANCE

**EcosMed**
Terra di Sicilia
Nugae — PRIVATE COMPANIES

~6 M€

Co-founded by Fondazione MeSSInA

Reinvestment in the Community: the profits generated by the cooperative are reinvested in the research center and in initiatives to tackle educational poverty