



In an effort to help an endemic species that is under threat from pollution and climate change to survive

imagin is partnering with the Hombre y Territorio (HyT) association to help preserve orange coral in the Mediterranean

- ***The programme, presented in Almuñécar (Granada), kicked off with the creation of four "coral gardens", with a total of 60,000 corals planted and sowed.***
- ***In coming months, imagin will create initiatives aimed at its users so that 'imaginers' can do their part to help preserve the coral.***
- ***HyT and its MedCoral programme, with a team of biologists specialised in preserving the environment, have developed highly successful techniques to aid in the recovery and preservation of coral.***
- ***imagin engages in a wide range of sustainability actions via imaginPlanet, with initiatives to create a positive impact on the planet and on society as a whole.***

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imagin, the digital services and lifestyle platform promoted by CaixaBank, presented in Almuñécar (Granada, Spain) a project in collaboration with the Hombre y Territorio (HyT) Association, a non-profit organisation with 20 years of experience studying and preserving the environment, to help restore orange coral in the Mediterranean through the MedCoral preservation and restoration programme.

The alliance between imagin and HyT relies on advice from Blue Carbon, a project to protect the sea, lower CO₂ emissions, and mitigate climate change, and which has already worked with the digital platform to install floating marine bins (*seabins*) in Spanish ports to collect waste and plastic from the water. In 2022, this collaboration allowed as many as nine imagin seabins to be installed, removing 21 tonnes of plastic from the ocean. imagin is already firmly committed to sustainability and promotes a wide range of activities that help protect forests, preserve seas and oceans, and work to transform society.

In 2023, assisting with the recovery of coral reefs will be the main focus of imagin's plan to



have a positive impact on the environment. The collaboration with HyT and MedCoral will enhance an innovative marine regeneration project that is already underway in the Maro-Cerro Gordo Cliffs Natural Area, between the provinces of Malaga and Granada.

At the event to present the project, representatives from imagin and HyT explained the details of how this collaboration is going to be structured. They also visited part of an artificial reef off the coast of Almuñécar where four orange coral gardens have already been created, equivalent to 60,000 individual corals. imagin's contribution to the project will be essential to study, monitor and maintain these first reefs, a task entrusted to the HyT scientific team, as well as to potentially create new regeneration areas in the near future.

The uphill battle of orange coral

Orange coral, whose scientific name is *Astroides calycularis*, is a species endemic to the Mediterranean Sea, meaning it lives exclusively in this part of the planet. It is currently under threat due to pollution, rising ocean temperatures and the proliferation of exotic invasive species, such as the brown Asian seaweed *Rugulopteryx okamurae*, which has been expanding throughout the Spanish Mediterranean since 2016.

However, steps can be taken to help maintain and connect existing coral populations. In fact, HyT's MedCoral Programme has been taking steps for 15 years to learn about, preserve and protect the coral reefs, and it has come up with techniques to generate small populations in an environment where they can survive, and which are proving to be highly successful.

These complementary techniques are already being applied in the Maro-Cerro Gordo natural area. This is done through rescuing and recovering colonies detached from their natural habitat, which cannot survive on their own, and helping orange coral larvae to take hold in a suitable location and create new colonies, which are called "gardens".

It's worth noting that orange coral reproduce sexually only once a year, in very specific conditions involving the phase of the moon (it has to be a full moon) and water temperature (sufficiently warm, between 18 and 20°, but not too warm). Once these conditions are in place, the corals reproduce sexually, and after some time, the fertilised females spawn thousands of larvae into the water column, although their chances of survival are slim. Because of this, the team of biologists at HyT collect a portion of the larvae released and scatter them in the appropriate zone.

This year, this reproductive phase took place recently, during the most recent full moon, and the larvae were gathered and "sowed" in the designated zone, an artificial reef located in the natural area. The project is off to a good start and these first four gardens are already in place. All that is left is for them to thrive and grow. The contribution of imagin and its users will be essential to the project's success.



Our interest for orange coral is not just related to our desire to help the species survive, but also to its characteristics as a catalyst for marine biodiversity. The presence of communities of this animal attracts other animals and contributes to the wealth of the ecosystem.

imaginPlanet, three years committed to sustainability

This assistance project is organised by imaginPlanet, the imagin programme that develops products, services, content, agreement and initiatives based on sustainability to create a positive impact on the planet and on society as a whole. This programme has been running for three years and boasts a [proven track record of successful projects](#).

One of the environmental challenges where imagin focuses its efforts is the preservation of seas and oceans, an issue that is also of great concern to young people, prompting them to act.

To help these orange coral gardens survive and grow, imagin will launch various initiatives in coming months that its community of users, our *imaginers*, can contribute to in order to help with this project. The first one will be set in motion in the next few days with the new imagin direct deposit campaign, with every new directly deposited salary in imagin starting in helping to monitor and care for the coral. imagin will also maintain the financial incentives for its own customers (150 euros for salaries over 1,000 euros and 50 euros for salaries below that amount) to ensure the competitiveness of its services.

Similarly, imagin will create an NFT inspired by the orange coral for every user who joins the campaign. This will be the second collection of *tokenised* digital illustrations launched by imagin, after the successful Clean the Oceans initiative. These NFTs reflect our support for projects with a positive impact and contain details on each user's specific input to a sustainable challenge, tracing their contribution. In addition, the illustrations are designed using advanced digital art resources, including generative artificial intelligence. imagin's was the first project in Europe that has been able to showcase, using blockchain technology, the impact that end users have on ESG initiatives.

About imagin

imagin is a lifestyle platform promoted by CaixaBank that offers digital, financial and non-financial services that help its users, mainly young people under 30, with their daily lives and future projects. It currently has a community of 4.3 million users, a figure that is constantly growing thanks to the wide range of content and services, many of them free to access, and how easy it is to sign up and use its products to varying degrees, something that, unlike traditional banks, does not necessarily involve registering as a financial customer.



In addition, the imagin application provides a range of financial products to cover the saving and financing needs of young people as they transition into adulthood and start to have their own income and their own lifestyle projects. In that regard, imagin is adhering to the characteristics that have turned it into the leading bank for young people: mobile only operations (the services are provided exclusively through the app, with no branches or website, which only serves an informational purpose), no fees for the user and a clear and simple language that is particularly suited to communicating directly with young people.

About HyT and the MedCoral Programme

HyT, Asociación Hombre y Territorio is an Andalusian non-profit that engages in research, preservation and outreach activities involving nature. Active since 2003 and headquartered in Seville, it works vigorously with different public and private organisations in multiple areas related to the biology of preservation.

In the area of corals, its MedCoral Programme has been running since 2008, its goals being to learn about and preserve Mediterranean corals.

www.hombreyterritorio.org

https://www.instagram.com/medcoral_program