

# Decentralized cooperation in the Mediterranean: Perspectives for the Period 2007-2013

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### The key factors (2007-2013)

The challenges for territorial cooperation in the Mediterranean are easier to predict for the year 2006, due to a combination of several different factors:

- a. The adoption of the financial perspectives. The agreement of December 16th, 2005 at last gives the territorial actors a durable framework, even if the European Commission's (EC) original aspirations to work towards Objective 3 "territorial cooperation" have been significantly reduced in scope. Nevertheless, North/North cooperation on the Mediterranean should benefit from a budget similar to that allocated for the period 2000-2006 with the prospect of operating within a unified Mediterranean context. Transnational projects will continue to benefit from about 1.4 billion euros of Community co-financing at a rate of 75% for all participants across the board. Negotiations to designate the boundaries for the future Interreg areas for 2007-2013 are now more or less completed. The Mediterranean is one of the zones which will see most changes compared to the previous period. The new zone will in fact join up the existing "Western Mediterranean" and "Archimed" zones, and will also include nearly all the Italian regions, as well as Slovenia. In total,
- b. 8 of the existing 25 EU countries will be concerned: Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Slovenia, Malta, Greece and Cyprus with the possibility that Turkey could be included under the terms of its Pre-Accession instrument. Furthermore, in relation to North/South cooperation, part of the cross-border package has already been earmarked for co-financing the European Neighbourhood Policy (about 25% of the total), equivalent to about 1.5 billion euros. To this sum it will no doubt be possible to add similar amounts under section 4 of the budget ("external relations"), in order to cover not only bilateral cooperation, but also cooperation for a whole maritime basin, with particular reference to the Euromediterranean context.
- c. The Barcelona summit has given rise to a vigorous mobilization of regional and local actors, and this mobilization has in particular manifested itself in favour of decentralized cooperation in the Mediterranean basin. It reflects the sentiments evoked by the foreign affairs ministers of the Euromediterranean Partnership when they met in June 2005.
- d. The EC is now better equipped to measure the requirements of the cross-border package within the framework of the neighbourhood policy instrument. The regulations of the European neighbourhood and partnership instrument have now established the rules of eligibility for bilateral cross-border cooperation and also for cooperation on the basis of a whole maritime basin, which will make it possible to involve all regional and local partners, and will thus provide a real tool for decentralized cooperation in the Mediterranean.
- d. At the same time, the EC approved on January 25th, 2006 a number of programmes relating to the EU's external cooperation with the ACP countries and with the EU's neighbouring countries. The regional and local dimension is a constant feature, particularly in relation to the guidelines on the subject: "Non-state actors and Local Authorities in development." Recognition of the role that regional and local collectivities have to play in the external partnerships of the EU is finally starting to become a reality after several years of uncertainty.

### The Opportunities which Need to be Seized to Implement Decentralized Cooperation in the Mediterranean

A certain number of questions nevertheless still need to be answered regarding the establishment of future programmes, not least of which is the relationship between the continuing Interreg on the North, and the component of north/south and south/south cooperation of the ENP. Administrative and financial architecture which is going to be set up will have a major influence on the future success of these programmes. Common sense would call for the rapid establishment of a system similar to the one set up in the Baltic over the period 2000-2006. It should be remembered that, in the case of the Baltic programme, the FEDER, PHARE and TACIS credits were administered by the same team in the offices of shared secretariats at Rostock (Germany) and at Karlskrona (Sweden), thus making the best use of the different skills available and avoiding possible elements of friction that could be caused by the

On 25th and 26th November 2005, two days before the Euro-Mediterranean Summit, representatives of the governments and administrations of 70 regions of 21 countries in the Euro-Mediterranean area met in Barcelona at the Euro-Med Regional Conference Barcelona+10. The Generalitat, Government of Catalonia organised the event together with the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions in Europe, in collaboration with the Committee of the Regions of the European Union. The objective of the regional presidents attending was to analyse the Barcelona Process and its future development from the point of view of the regions and, especially, to establish which role the local and regional governments will play in the future.

The emergence of the regions in the European Union as an important player in international relations is a phenomenon dating from the 70s which became fully consolidated in the 80s. The principal objective of the regions as a collective, apart from defending their own competencies in the European remit, was to contribute to create a union in which the territories and people of Europe were coming closer and closer. In the 90s the regional governments played an important role in preparing the expansion of the European Union, through a tenacious work of decentralised cooperation – aimed to resolve the myriad of practical problems relating to the adhesion process. Those present at the meeting were in agreement that the next enlargements and, above all, the new

## THE REGIONS MAKE THEMSELVES HEARD

European neighbourhood policy (including, of course, the policies towards the Mediterranean area) are the new international challenges that the regional authorities have to face.

The local and regional authorities are responsible for a series of policies that directly affect the citizens. Furthermore they can count on a deep understanding and permanent contact with the people and social players of the regions, and this turns them into an essential bridge between the great national and international projects and people's everyday life. For this reason, their representatives gathered in Barcelona, demanded a greater role in the strategies and programmes of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

The participants' demands were brought together in a declaration jointly signed by the mayors attending the Euro-Mediterranean Cities' Conference Barcelona+10, which was organised by the Ajuntament de Barcelona (Barcelona City Council) at the same time as the Conference of the Regions. The declaration advocated for a change in the Euro-Mediterranean Process that would bring the people to the centre of the process: to move from a partnership of the States to a partnership of men and women. The participation of the local and regional authorities is essential to this task, as they are the levels closest to the citizens and responsible for the public policies which directly affect people's everyday lives.

In order to centre the process on the people, the declaration signed by the regional presidents

and mayors proposed taking the Millennium Development Objectives approved by the United Nations as a reference point. To the sustainable human development advocated by the Millennium Objectives, one also needs to add the demand for democracy and good governance. Furthermore, respect for human rights and the guarantee of human dignity are elements that have to be included in the reference framework of any Euro-Mediterranean Partnership action.

The signers did not just make these declarations, as they also included two other important elements in the text of the declaration. Firstly, they made a series of proposals, principally addressed to the State Governments and the European institutions so that they could discuss on these topics during the two-day later Heads of States and Governments Summit. Secondly, and very significantly, the mayors and regional presidents adopted concrete commitments for their administrations. These commitments set the course for the implication of the regions through decentralised cooperation. They take onboard crucial subjects, such as technological and commercial cooperation, education and professional training, dialogue between societies, immigrants' living conditions and the fight against racism and all forms of xenophobia, including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

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specific constraints inherent in the implementation of each financial instrument. In order to avoid any operational delays, it would be preferable to make a certain number of choices with regard to the location and structure of the future secretariat as soon as possible. Past experiences show that Mediterranean projects have regularly suffered delays in this respect. With the expectations created by the adoption of the new neighbourhood programme, it is not acceptable to envisage the type of delay that has occurred in the past, sometimes amounting to more than 18 months. The recurrence of a similar situation during the setting-up of a programme could have dire consequences when it comes to considering the future budget provisions for the European Union in 2008/2009. The innovative nature of the future project means that it is even more important to

anticipate the complex problems that will be involved in setting it up.

### *The strategy and future priorities of the "Mediterranean" programme North-North*

The DG Regio main priorities for the Mediterranean zone are already known; it is for the State Region partnership to outline the final details before entering the operational phase. In this way we know that the priorities for north/north cooperation will include risk management, control of water resources, safety at sea, and regional competition on a transnational scale. It should be remembered that the transition from a Community initiative (Interreg IIIb) to Mainstream regional policy (Objective 3) will reinforce the EC's ability to fix the strategic priorities for the programme.

### *Which strategy for north/south programmes?*

The definition of priorities for cooperation within the framework of the future neighbourhood instrument will inevitably be different from that applied in the north/north context. The problems of establishing a viable legal and financial framework will inevitably lead to a complete separation of the north/north and north/south programmes. Regrettable as this may be, it is nonetheless a certainty that the north/south programme will include more "people to people" projects, whilst north/north cooperation will deal more with EU structural projects. It remains to be seen whether it will be possible to manage, on a case-by-case basis and in a coordinated way, a number of north/south structural projects involving national and regional authori-

## COOPERATION BETWEEN TERRITORIAL COLLECTIVES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: THE CURRENT SITUATION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

Decentralised public cooperation is no longer an emerging dossier within the framework of international cooperation but has become an assumed reality for local and regional governments. The relations between local governments demonstrate the added value of a partnership established between equals, based on sharing common values and objectives.

In the Mediterranean context, there has been a growing implication of the cities, provinces and regions in international cooperation actions. It is evident that it has become another element in the political strategy of the territorial community. Slowly, the cooperation actions coming from the different components of the local community (public services, associative sector, professional organisations, companies and representatives of different population groups) are gathering. As a consequence, we are advancing towards a new model of cooperation that is taking over from the classical, more vertical vision, centred on the simple transfer of resources. Furthermore, we are moving towards a complex cooperative system, based on multilevel relations that ought to be richer and more dynamic.

Within the framework of the commemorative acts of the tenth anniversary of the Barcelona Process, the Diputació de Barcelona (Barcelona

regional authority) organised a seminar on September 2005 on "Appraisal of and prospects for Decentralised Cooperation among Euro-Mediterranean Local Governments" to examine its effectiveness in two regards. Firstly, to reflect on the decentralised cooperation implemented in the Mediterranean area. And, secondly, to debate the prospects that –in the medium and long-term– should direct this cooperative platform.

The meeting matched up with the definition of the strategic policies of the Arco Latino Association in order to achieve one of its principal objectives: to establish links with the south and east shores of the Mediterranean within the framework of the Barcelona agreements. The Arco Latino is an association of individual Spanish regional and town councils, Italian provinces and French departments in the western Mediterranean, which makes up a south European polycentric Euro-territory that stretches from the Algarve to Sicily.

The 40 experts attending the meeting agreed that there was a need to define a decentralised cooperation that was effective, efficient and, above all, coherent with the new challenges of the Euro-Mediterranean Association and the European Neighbourhood Policy.

In particular, the Barcelona Declaration, the

end result of the seminar's discussions, demonstrates the need to create specific instruments that permit the valuation of the cooperation of the territorial collectives (through a Euro-Mediterranean Decentralised Cooperation Observatory and a School of Governance), the recognition of the role of local and regional governments within the framework of the Euro-Med Partnership (participation in the elaboration process of the European Neighbourhood Instrument and the creation of a Euro-Med forum for the local and regional authorities) and to continue cementing the cooperation between the local actors in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The local and regional governments are, without a doubt, going to have an increasingly important role within the framework of Euro-Mediterranean relations and for this reason, they need to be incorporated in it and recognised by it.

More information

[www.euromediterrania2005.org](http://www.euromediterrania2005.org)

[www.arcolatino.org](http://www.arcolatino.org)

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ties in a very wide variety of institutional contexts. To be able to achieve this we will need to be sure of the real desire of countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean to participate in projects agreed with the EU in a spirit of decentralized cooperation.

### New Partnership Opportunities to be Seized

The meeting between cities and regions held during the Barcelona summit on November 26th, 2005 led for the first time to a common declaration made by all partners present. In view of the challenges to be faced and the complexity of the partnerships between regional and local authorities on the southern shore of the Mediterranean, several new factors have emerged:

- The need to make sure that the spirit of cooperation does not become

dispersed, and that efforts are focused on precise objectives which involve the partners in a much closer collaboration than in the past;

- The need to overcome the institutional barriers existing between countries, by bringing together in the cooperation projects the decentralized levels of administration of the countries on the southern shore: the regions, the *départements/provinces*, and the cities. There is a real need to organize and benefit from projects by stressing the complimentary nature of partners and the existing synergies. In this way there emerges in different regions a common desire to organize cooperation between entities in a more structured fashion, particularly through existing channels. The following examples are noteworthy:
  - Cooperation between cities through the Mediterranean network of Euro-cities (Med-Cities) and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

- Cooperation between *départements/provinces* through the Arco Latino network
- Cooperation between regions through the CPMR and its Inter-Mediterranean Commission.

There will certainly be every good reason to develop the appropriate opportunities and methods to collaborate between these different networks, with the overriding aim of creating a type of network skill-bank, the frame of reference of which remains to be defined. Its main role could be to focus on the methodology, and the matching up of supply and demand for services according to the skills and priorities of each partner. Various possible initiatives which could be undertaken can be mentioned. The most pressing need would be to mobilize all potential participants so as to establish cooperation in a structured and effective manner.