

# Multilevel Governance in a Changing World

Bringing the Regions of the Mediterranean Closer to Citizens

## MEDGOVERNANCE PROJECT FINAL POLICY PAPER

Version as of 4<sup>th</sup> July 2011



Co-financed by  
European Regional  
Development Found

## **Introduction: Background and aims of the MEDGOVERNANCE Programme**

**1.** Back in 2005, the Regions of the Inter-Mediterranean Commission (IMC) of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) agreed on the need to improve the governance of Mediterranean policies, at regional, national and international level and on how to ensure a greater involvement of the regional levels alongside both European and partners. The aim was to improve the effectiveness of policies led within the Mediterranean Basin. This reflection, along with a long-standing collaboration between several Research Institutes working on the Mediterranean area, which in 2006 constituted the Network of Mediterranean Institutes with the purpose of establishing methodological and research foundations for the regional policies in the Mediterranean area, gave rise to the launch of the MEDGOVERNANCE Project in 2009, where the Regions of Lazio, Tuscany, PACA, Catalonia, Andalusia and Piedmont, with the support of their research institutes, members of the above-mentioned Network, (Fondación Tres Culturas de Sevilla, IEMed in Barcelona, Institut de la Méditerranée, Marseille, Paralleli, Turin, CeSPI, Rome, MAEM/MEMA, Florence), PLURAL and the CPMR-IMC, undertook to move forward on this issue. The aim of the project was to finalise a first series of proposals in 2010 and 2011, designed to feed into the European debates at a time when negotiations are getting under way on the next EU programming period and the European Union's budget after 2013.

**2.** This project has been co-funded by the MED programme. The activity is carried out in the form of reflections and proposals which are significant within a global Mediterranean-wide framework in which Regions share the same culture, the same issues and the conviction that the regional authorities have a key role to play in taking forward the Mediterranean area. The partner Regions in the project have been involved on an individual level, while bearing in mind the need to propose ideas for a future that concerns the whole of the Mediterranean basin and its regional actors.

**3.** This work, consisting of diagnosis, analysis, field study and political discussion, resulted in a series of proposals and demands from the project partners: requests addressed to the EU institutions and States from Europe and the south side of the Mediterranean. Of course, the Regions and all the partners in MEDGOVERNANCE are committed to taking forward and stepping up their actions, through concrete initiatives and projects<sup>1</sup> for a new, more inclusive partnership-based Mediterranean governance system that contributes above all towards a sustainable and cohesive development of the Mediterranean Sea area as a whole.

---

<sup>1</sup> See point 26

## Part 1: A new era for the Mediterranean

**4.** Deep-seated changes are occurring in the southern and eastern parts of the Mediterranean. There is a real desire for profound transformation and demands for social, economic and political reform. Civil societies in the south led by their youth are calling for real democracy and for development that is beneficial for all, which is the only way long-term stability can be guaranteed in the Mediterranean area. It is inconceivable for these reforms to fail over the long term. The consequences would be devastating. However, it is necessary to sustain this movement in the short term to help face economic, social and migratory difficulties and the tensions that this momentum may generate temporarily and that add to the fundamental problems already present in these territories, e.g. extreme social division in the cities, rural poverty, environmental degradation, underemployment, low wages and increasing food prices, etc.

**5.** There is also a clear need to propose collaborative long-term solutions to address these challenges at international, European, national and also regional and local levels. It is civil society - the citizens that initiated this movement - who are calling for democracy, social justice, human rights and development. Their closest representatives, the local territorial levels, need to accompany these processes, strengthen them and learn from them in order to be able to meet expectations.

**6.** These changes are reflected in the situation over on the north side of the Mediterranean, where people are also coping with globalisation and a deep structural crisis, which although it is not as economically and socially devastating as in the south, risks heightening the trend towards the closure of minds, economies and borders. Europe and the Mediterranean are thus faced with economic, social and demographic problems worsened by a deep crisis in public finances, and solutions need to be found for the short and long term. The solution has to be cooperative and a global one.

**7.** The territorial dimension of this new set of circumstances in the Mediterranean is a key factor. The Regions are all convinced of the regional level's essential added value in seeking solutions to address and meet the challenges facing the Mediterranean and to assist its people. It is important to recall that back in 2008, protest movements in the south were instigated in the remotest and poorest regions. The territorial dimension engages the Regions in a new period of cooperation supporting possible cohesion policies in the East and South of the Mediterranean Basin. If in Europe the cohesion policies promoted local development, competitiveness and sustainability and offered new opportunities for many European Regions, we could expect that in the East and South of the Mediterranean Basin, taking in consideration the European experience, there will be the need for new policies more oriented to local development and the need for a stronger cooperation with UE Regions on these policies.

**8.** The deep and irreversible changes under way on the south side of the Mediterranean, at the very same time as the European Union and its Member States are initiating talks with their partners to define the EU's new priorities and the

ensuing instruments to deliver them, are creating a momentum that the Regions intend to take advantage of, with regard to:

- a. implementing the EU 2020 Strategy in the Mediterranean,
- b. renewing cohesion and neighbourhood policy instruments, including in their territorial dimension,
- c. and above all new governance mechanisms that should give the regional level full scope to contribute towards putting back into motion the intergovernmental machine (Union for the Mediterranean: the Barcelona process) that has ground to a halt in the Mediterranean.

It is with the aim of contributing to the responses that will need to be provided in the north, south and east of the Mediterranean, within a system of multi-level governance, that the MEDGOVERNANCE project has looked at the current place of the Regions in Mediterranean governance and how this involvement can be stepped up.

## Part 2: The empowerment of regional authorities in the governance of Mediterranean policies

9. The first step of the MEDGOVERNANCE project consisted in making a shared diagnosis on the actual impact of regional authorities on European and Mediterranean policies. A collaborative enquiry was carried out in five different policy fields: transport, environment, competitiveness and innovation, migrations and culture. The conclusions emerging from these sectoral enquiries were compiled in a *Mediterranean Governance Report*.

10. The rich analytical material highlighted the progressive regionalisation of European and national policies. The introduction of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in 1975 gave a major impetus to increasing the competences and funding managed by regions of the European Community and to a growing political recognition of the contribution of the regions in the involvement of subnational entities in delivering European cohesion policy. Regional authorities have become the focal point of planning and running EU cohesion policy with the drafting of Operational Programmes (OPs). Within each Member State, the need for managing structural funds contributed to the emergence of a professional regional governance level. More generally, regions emerged all over Europe as key partners of both the European Commission and Member States. Among various developments at European and national level, the establishment of the Committee of the Regions of the European Union by the Maastricht Treaty recognised the key contribution of regional and local authorities to European policy-making. In parallel, the emergence of *multilevel governance* in the intellectual “tool box” of the Union also contributed to the recognition of territorial (local and regional) actors.

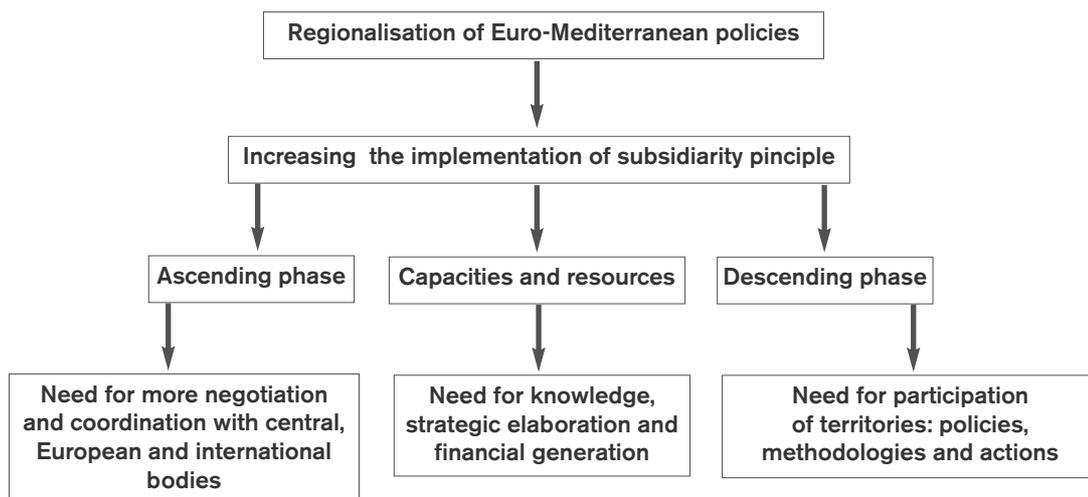
11. Beyond this formal recognition, the *Mediterranean Governance Report* has given evidence of an increasing role of regions in the implementation of European policies. It has also identified the constitution of a “regional influence capacity”. The formulation of EU policies derives from a very complex decision-making process involving a wide range of public and private stakeholders competing/cooperating with one another. In this context, **numerous organisations have been set up to foster the regions’ influence in European policy-making** and to work as much as possible with the European Commission because of its initiative role at the beginning of the decision-making process. In this regard, the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR), which was set up 1973 and currently brings together 161 regions from 28 countries, routinely drafts policy recommendations and opinions. Other regional organisations such as REGLEG or the establishment of regional delegations in Brussels contribute to the day-to-day follow-up and influence of regions on European policy-making.

12. **Mediterranean regions** have been benefiting substantially from the **growing recognition** of the regional level in the **EU governance framework** for the past 4 decades. They also benefit from the support of several **networks and organisations** representing Mediterranean regional and local authorities at European level, such as the CPMR’s Inter Mediterranean Commission, the Mediterranean Commission of UCLG, Arco Latin, Medcities, etc. For more than 10 years, **territorial cooperation programmes** (INTERREG, MED...) under regional policy have also been providing Mediter-

ranean regions with significant funding for exchanging best practices, drawing reflections and visions as well as coordinated actions in their various fields of competences. These programmes have progressively been endowed with increasing resources and have been gradually, but still not sufficiently, integrated in the “mainstream” regional policy, today being recognised as an objective of the European Union and no longer as a just a Community Initiative Programme (CIP). Different expert studies and reflections have recently been carried out in order to improve the regionalisation and coordination of these programmes with other EU policies impacting in Mediterranean territories.

**13.** The analysis points out diverse **needs for strengthening the regionalisation and coordination of Euro-Mediterranean policies** as elaborated in the following graph. The regionalisation means the implementation of the subsidiarity principle through its ascending and descending phases supported by capacities and resources. Thus, three basic needs are identified: the need for more negotiation and coordination with central State, European and international levels; the need for more territorial-horizontal participation with appropriated policies, methodologies and actions; the need for more knowledge, strategic elaboration and financial generation.

**Figure 1 - Needs for strengthening the regionalisation of Euro-Mediterranean policies**



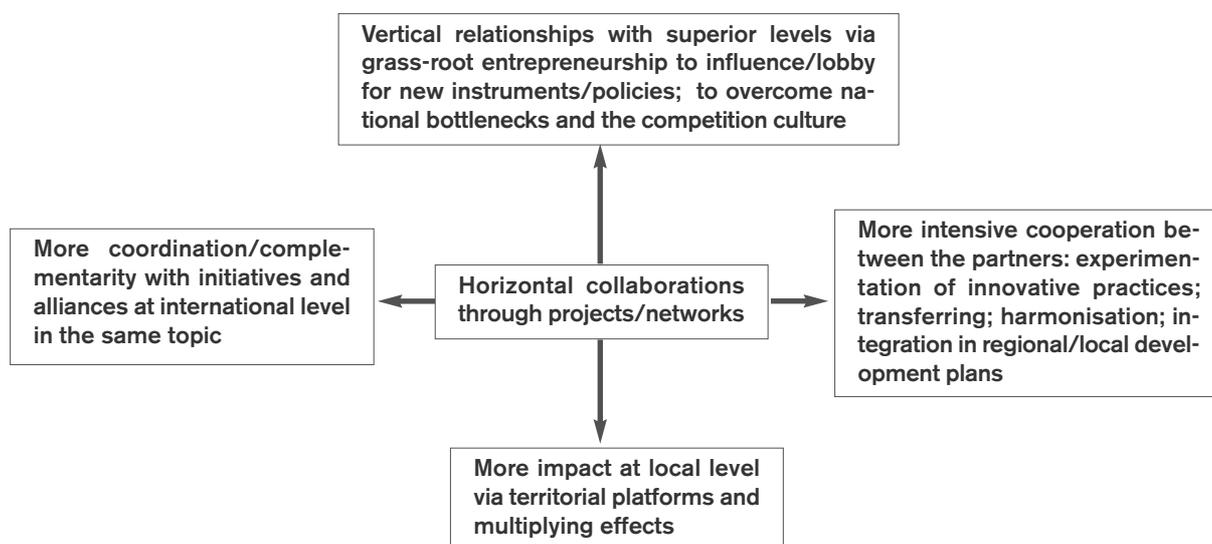
Deepening the analysis on practices of networking and projects in the Euro-Mediterranean territorial cooperation, a positive dynamic of regions and local authorities in building new multilevel governance mechanisms has been detected.

**14.** In the last 20 years hundreds of **networks and projects** have been implemented with territorial and decentralised cooperation. The Medgovernance project, through the **benchmarking analysis**<sup>2</sup>, has stressed that territorial cooperation networks and projects represents another important channel for strengthen “regional influence capacity” promoting common visions and interests, and facing common challenges vis-à-vis the European as well as the national level. Many times

<sup>2</sup> See the *Benchmarking Report on Mediterranean Governance* promoted by territorial cooperation projects and networks

the territorial cooperation goes beyond the networking type of activities to encompass more **intensive forms of cooperation** (pilot actions, development of policy tools, harmonisation of policies and practices, transfer of practices, improvement of regional/ local policies and strategies). Furthermore they may represent an **opportunity to strengthen coordination between actors, projects and programmes** in the Euro-Mediterranean area. Some of them have created durable processes to support **a new bottom-up governance and new strategic projects** for increasing the impact on the Mediterranean sustainable development. Networks and projects of territorial cooperation have **a real added value for building new multilevel governance mechanisms** (see the graph below).

**Figure 2 - The added value of territorial cooperation in the projects/networks**



**15.** On the other hand some **weakness in territorial cooperation projects and networks** have been indicated concerning: the difficulty to go beyond networking types of activities and in generating effective policy change; a low degree of sustainability and a low level of involvement of external stakeholders and central State representatives; weak partnerships with discontinuous or heterogeneous operative and political commitment of partners/members; fragmentation of projects and initiatives that are often isolated and not integrated into the national or regional development plans.

**16.** The benchmarking analysis indicates that the **strengthening of coordination and the creation of synergies** with similar initiatives or key actors operating in a specific field may represent an added value in terms of sustainability and effectiveness. **A long-term, progressive and cumulative process to increase Mediterranean multilevel governance through the integration of projects/networks into strategic initiatives, in the framework of strong alliances with national institutions and international organizations, should be promoted.**

17. The MEDGOVERNANCE project has hence allowed **to adopt an integrated point of view on “Mediterranean policies”** that include a wide range of EU policies and instruments such as, on the one hand, the Euromediterranean partnership, the Mediterranean part of the Neighbourhood Policy and, to some extent, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), on the other hand, territorial cooperation programmes of the regional policy but also mainstream regional policies take part of the vast amount of resources and instruments that the European Union devote to the Mediterranean area. However, **a deep gap remains between internal and external Mediterranean policies** and instruments thus impeding the emergence of an actual Mediterranean governance framework that is required to address many complex issues and crisis that are impacting today the area. The emergence of approaches aimed at coordinating transnational cooperation programmes with other EU policies in areas of the European Union such as the Baltic Sea or the Danube area have been considered as an interesting perspective.

### Part 3: The debate on a Mediterranean Strategy (and macro regional approach)

18. In the past 3 years, “macro-regional fever” has taken over the debate on the governance of the European Union. The decision taken by European Council in December 2007 to launch an integrated strategy for the Baltic Sea region initiated a movement. The Council meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2009 subsequently took a similar decision concerning the Danube region. Since then, a large number of actors in numerous other European areas started lobbying for their own macro-regional strategy. In that context, the MEDGOVERNANCE partners agreed that there was a need to analyse such an approach and to evaluate whether it could be relevant in order to improve the governance of Mediterranean policies and, more particularly, to strengthen the coordination of mainstream regional policies with transnational cooperation instruments.

19. In their attempt to reach a balanced and, insofar as possible, a dispassionate assessment on the “macro-regional case”, MEDGOVERNANCE partners identified several areas of consensus. Firstly, the governance process implemented in the Baltic Sea area offers a key position to Member States and national authorities, while a limited role is devolved to the local and regional level in the initiative and in the monitoring of the Strategy. Macro-regional approaches, as experimented in the Baltic Sea area and in the Danube area, should therefore not be considered as a rigid governance model but rather as an open and flexible approach for coordinating EU policies and instruments in a transnational region. Secondly, macro-regions do not constitute per se a new policy instrument of the EU since the procedure implemented for the Baltic Sea and Danube areas is still presented by European Commission officials as mere experiments that need to be analysed and assessed before any dissemination to other areas could be envisaged. Thirdly macro-regions do have an external dimension because of the geographic functionalities which overcome the borders and because of the political interest of neighbourhood and accession countries to participate in integrated strategies. Moreover, expectations for increasing funds deriving from macro-regions are also undermined by the principle of the “3 No’s” (“no additional institution, no additional legislation, no additional funding”) repeatedly stated by Commission officials.

20. An **integrated approach towards Mediterranean policies**, instruments and programmes is highly welcome in order to improve the Mediterranean governance framework and in order to narrow the gap between the internal dimension and the external dimension of Mediterranean policies. An integrated approach could hence help to (1) achieve a new qualitative leap in the mainstreaming of the Mediterranean transnational cooperation programme in the future regional policy (2014-2020); (2) firmly establish Southern Mediterranean countries as partners and neighbours of the EU in a context of geopolitical uncertainty and changes in the broad Euro-Mediterranean area.

21. On this basis, the “enquiry” carried out by the projects partners led to the identification of 3 different scenarios that could lead to the emergence of a Mediterranean Strategy based on macro-regional approach:

- a. The **first scenario** is based on the current trend of envisaging different sub-regional processes. Here, the European Union would become an archipelago of integration sub-processes. Macro-regions are based on geographic functionalities, especially on geo-environmental factors, and on the other hand they seem often recovering former geopolitical blocs and alliances like the Hanseatic League, *Mittel Europa*, the Venetian Re-

public... In the Mediterranean area, the first initiative comes from the Adriatic-Ionian area comprising Italy, Greece, Slovenia and Western Balkan countries. As a result, territories from the Western Mediterranean would be starting a lobbying process in order to be recognised by the European Union as a macro-region such as the Adriatic-Ionic Strategy<sup>3</sup>. Operationally, these macro-regional Strategies may be coordinated through co-ordination staff supported by the European Commission.

b. In the **second scenario**, a macro-regional Strategy is drawn up for the whole Mediterranean area. As underlined above, the main conditions for such a scenario are the recognition and adoption of such an approach by the key stakeholders of the Union for the Mediterranean. The UfM Heads of State summit could result in the adoption of an updated version of the UfM strategic priorities integrating new considerations on the financial crisis, food crisis, climate change... On the basis of these UfM priorities, a Strategy could be drafted for the whole Mediterranean area, including all Southern and Eastern countries and territories. Furthermore transnational cooperation programmes (MED, ENPI-CBC...) could be merged within the macro-region framework.

c. In the **third scenario**, the integration approach is led by a “bottom-up” process and by the development of macro-projects integrating European and Mediterranean strategies within local or regional priorities. This scenario involves a flexible scale, depending on the strategic policy area and the projects, in line with the strategy implemented by the Union for the Mediterranean. For instance, in the case of maritime safety, the whole Mediterranean region appears as a relevant scale of action. In other policy areas, like transport (high-speed railways, motorways of the sea or short sea shipping), a more restricted scale would be relevant.

**22. The trend for a Mediterranean macro-regional Strategy seems today very unlikely** given the lack of consensus existing between regions on different key issues such as, among other things, the geographic scale of a future Mediterranean macro-regional approach. However, MEDGOVERNANCE partners and wider Mediterranean stakeholders agree on **the need for developing strategic integrated projects (along the lines of the third scenario)**. Beyond the issue of institutional arrangements and governance, the Mediterranean is in need of effective multi-level transnational governance in order to address the numerous environmental, social and economic issues challenging the future of the area. Simultaneously, improving the coordination between transnational cooperation programmes (MED, ENPI-CBC) or between those programmes and mainstream EU policies (regional policy, neighbourhood policy...) constitutes a realistic perspective for Mediterranean regions.

---

<sup>3</sup> As acknowledged and encouraged in the conclusions of the European Council of the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2011: “Member States are invited to continue work in cooperation with the Commission on possible future macro-regional strategies, in particular as regards the Adriatic and Ionian region”

#### Part 4: Conclusions and statements

**23.** This section aims to propose actions to be initiated by the Mediterranean Regions themselves of course, but also to urge the EU Institutions, the European Union and Partner States, as well as the Union for the Mediterranean: Barcelona Process (UfM) to launch a series of political actions and programmes in the very near future.

**24.** The MEDGOVERNANCE partners, coherently, call on **the UfM** to take forward and step up its permanent dialogue and collaboration with the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) and the different national and international associations of Regions and Local Authorities active in the Mediterranean basin and to rebuild its intervention on a more Euromediterranean based action in the framework of a general reflection on the future neighbourhood policy and with a stronger involvement, for European Partners, of the European Commission and the European External Action Services.

**25.** The MEDGOVERNANCE partners urgently demand a real **social, economic and territorial cohesion policy at Euro-Mediterranean level**. This cohesion policy must be defined and implemented at the northern, southern and eastern Mediterranean borders of the European Union. The Regions ask the European Commission and the European States to commit themselves to this policy. Funding under ERFD and a **deeply renewed neighbourhood policy** must be the instrument of this necessary cohesion policy.

This new neighbourhood policy must be flexible and capable of adapting to the different situations and developments of the partner countries. This new vision and its instruments must be built **in close partnership** of course with the States of the southern side of the Mediterranean, but also with their local and regional authorities. It can be inspired by the many actions which, some years ago, accompanied the enlargement towards Eastern countries.

This renewed neighbourhood policy should include territorial strands. Firstly, under bilateral programmes and action plans defined between each partner State and the European Commission, particularly through support for decentralisation processes in places where they are likely to emerge, as instruments for modernisation and greater effectiveness of public policies. In this perspective, the partners sustain the creation of an European Endowment for Democracy proposed in the Communication "A new response to a changing Neighbourhood", of the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the European Commission (COM(2011) 303), that should have a special dedicated attention to the diverse local territorial contexts, the implementation of the subsidiarity principle, the building of local democratic governance mechanisms and the defence of minority rights. Partners also strongly support the implementation of "pilot regional development programmes to tackle economic disparities between regions" (COM(2011) 303) that goes in the direction of a new cohesion policy in the Mediterranean, as well as the realisation of "*Comprehensive Insti-*

*tution-Building programmes to provide substantial expertise and financial support to build the capacity of (...) those institutions most needed to sustain democratisation” such as local authorities.*

**26.** Secondly, **territorial cooperation instruments** in the Mediterranean need to be reviewed, whether they come under Objective 3 of the current cohesion policy or the cross-border cooperation strand of ENPI. They are still designed to strengthen links between peoples and step up the involvement of regional and local authorities and civil society in the economic, social and territorial development of the territories concerned. But they also **need to make a big qualitative leap forward and contribute towards defining big joint strategic projects** that could be delivered on the ground using cohesion funding and funding from the renewed neighbourhood policy. Regions in both the north and south need to be fully involved in stronger cooperation.

Considering the need for an integrated and coordinated approach and considering also the strategic documents of the Medgov Regions, those joint strategic projects should be able **to involve sector programmes and funds** such as the Framework Programme on Research and Innovation, Community Innovation Programme, Horizon 2020, ... and the European Investment Bank.

**27.** These proposals cannot be introduced without the **EU States and partner countries** lending their active support for a cohesion policy at the EU's borders, which is the only one capable of ensuring security and prosperity for all in the long term. In order to be effective and supported by the general public, this policy **should include regional authorities** from both north and south.

**28.** The Regions involved in the MEDGOVERNANCE project are invited to take forward their joint considerations for an ever more partnership-based and inclusive governance. In this context, they should launch **joint initiatives and concrete projects concerning the 5 areas of action** highlighted under the MEDGOVERNANCE project, recalling that culture, transport, environment, education and migration are key issues for the future of the Mediterranean area.

**29.** With the support of the RIM, the Regions intend **to follow closely and regularly the short and long term developments on the Mediterranean and European scene** and how their proposals for a genuine Mediterranean cohesion policy are being taken into account.

### **Annexe: The documents of the Medgov Project**

The following documents are available and can be downloaded on the MEDGOVERNANCE Web portal ([www.medgov.net](http://www.medgov.net)):

The 5 Thematic Reports:

- Environment
- Transport
- Higher education
- Migrations
- Culture

The Mediterranean governance report – Towards an effective contribution of regional authorities to Euro-Mediterranean policies?

Benchmarking Report on Mediterranean Governance promoted by territorial cooperation projects and networks

The Medgovernance “papers on the issue of macro-regions:

- Old Wine in an new bottle: the macro regional case
- The geopolitical game of creating a Mediterranean macro-region
- 3 scenarios for a Mediterranean macro-regional approach