

# LADDER

LOCAL AUTHORITIES AS DRIVERS FOR DEVELOPMENT  
EDUCATION AND RAISING AWARENESS

**Strategic paper**

**for the LADDER MED Path**



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## Introduction

The Mediterranean region, our region, has been the cradle of important civilisations that influenced and still influence the entire world. It is an exceptional eco-region not only because of its geographical and historical characteristics and of its unique natural and cultural heritage, but also because of the shared feeling of its inhabitants to belong to 'the Mediterranean world'. At the crossroads of three continents, the Mediterranean brings together countries and peoples at various levels of economic and social development, as well as religions, languages and cultures that are different but still share a common heritage, built upon a century-old exchange between them. Such features make the Mediterranean a perfect illustration of the global situation.

The region has been going through much ecological disruption, due to the expanding desertification, the increasing water scarcity, *pollution* and the manifest effects of climate change. All of this is linked with major challenges currently faced by the Mediterranean including a major socio-political restructuring on its southern and eastern shores, a deep economic crisis in the north, as well as the widespread poverty issue. The countries of the region agreed that the Mediterranean needs to redirect its development to meet the significant economic and social needs in the South and East of its basin, without intensifying the process of environmental degradation.

Our vision for the future is the one of a region located at the meeting point of North and South, East and West, embracing the common values of equality between countries and generations, mutual respect between people, solidarity, and peace. At the same time, sustainable development has to be fostered, starting with a greener economy and more effective jobs market to obtain more justice, social cohesion, environmental protection and a more sustainable management of natural resources, in order to meet the needs of the current generation without compromising the wellbeing of future ones. Education needs to be strengthened through the introduction, into curricula, of concepts of sustainable development and through a holistic approach, from primary school right up to universities and graduate schools.

Indeed, education, in addition to being a recognised human right, is a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development and an essential tool for good governance, informed decision-making and the promotion of democracy. Sustainable development training strengthens the capacity of individuals, groups, communities, organizations and countries to pass judgement and make choices in favour of sustainable



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development. It can promote a shift in the way people think, eventually enabling them to make our world better, safer, healthier, more prosperous and with more possibilities for employment, thereby improving the quality of life and equity in different countries and generations. Development education can raise critical reflections and a greater awareness and empowerment so that new visions and concepts can be explored and new methods and tools developed.

### **The EuroMed Cooperation**

On 29<sup>th</sup> November 1995, 27 Heads of State and Government joined the new "Euro-Mediterranean Partnership" in Barcelona, sanctioning the start of the so-called "Barcelona Process". For the first time the states of the North and South shores of the Mediterranean cooperated "equally", as partners. This process was built upon three fundamental pillars:

- Institutional, with the main objective of peace-building in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict;
- Economic, aimed at implementing a free trade area in the Mediterranean starting in 2010;
- Cultural and social development.

Despite the expectations and efforts to achieve such objectives, the Barcelona process came to an end due to a variety of reasons, coming from both the partnership and the external world.

It is therefore essential to boost cooperation between European countries and those of the southern shore of the Mediterranean, and especially between local and social actors, taking into account the causes of the crisis and starting from the results achieved by the City Heritage characterizing the two sides and the identification of common interests.

The southern and south-eastern Mediterranean area is diverse and vast: it conventionally includes Al-Maghreb (the western region, that is, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya and Algeria) and Al-Mashreq (the eastern region, including Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, Jordan and Syria). This area is well known to be vulnerable, but it also presents great opportunities: 19% of the goods exchanged globally passes through the region, representing an increase in comparison with the 15% registered in the 90s. This area is a major oil and gas producing area in the world. Furthermore, there is a steady growth in the economies of southern Mediterranean countries and in the amount of economic exchange with the north bank, all of which despite the impact of the economic crisis of 2008-2009 and the political crisis of 2011. It is precisely thanks to trade relations developed over the centuries that the Mediterranean



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communities have been able to build a common identity. Recently, as clearly shown by the migration phenomenon, there are competing political, economic and military interests in the Mediterranean, which make it unfortunately a highly unstable political and social system, both in the north-European and the south regions. The southern and north shores sometimes allegedly seem like opposing universes not understanding each other. The southern shore, partly due to the effects of the Greater Mediterranean crisis, is shaken by a tsunami bringing instability. Deep geopolitical fractures are created between East and West and between the Levant and the Gulf. The competitions for hydrocarbons and the related infrastructure have appeared in parallel with various conflicts - religious, ethnic, or geopolitical. Moreover, the global jihad created instability and threatens human dignity. The collision between the obsolete socio-political structures and the young energy has also contributed to trigger the Arab Spring Revolutions. Instability has considerable effects on the economy, as it fosters inequalities that in turn generates, especially among the young, frustration, marginalization and radicalisation, encouraging the adherence to destructive ideological movements. The issue of the refugees fleeing from conflicts in Syria, Libya, Yemen, Iraq and many other countries in the region, and of the economic migrants, trying to get away from misery and despair adds on to the picture.

### **What can the LADDER consortium do?**

The Organizations participating in LADDER can promote concrete actions in order to:

- a) Ensure those policies, legislation and other regulatory and operational frameworks support DEAR;
- (b) Promote development through formal, non-formal and informal learning;
- (c) Equip educators with the competences to include development in their teaching;
- (d) Ensure that adequate tools and materials for DEAR are accessible;
- (e) Promote research on and development of DEAR;
- (f) Strengthen cooperation on DEAR at all levels, including exchange of experiences and technologies within the Mediterranean region.
- (g) Support the strengthening of democratic processes through enhanced institutionalization of the cooperation within the Mediterranean.



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- (h) Call for a general meeting of local authorities and civil society to brainstorm on the ways and paths towards a fundamental change of Mediterranean strategies among its constituting members.
- (i) Mobilize the OSC as a vehicle between local authorities and populations around participatory democracy issues, including on sensitive issues of security, tolerance, civility, respect and safeguard of the environment, gender equality, inclusive approach, and, in general, the achievement of sustainable development goals (reduction of poverty, illiteracy, access to health care for all, access to clean water, decrease of unemployment, etc.).

### **Advocacy issues**

The LADDER consortium calls for immediate action from the EU in order to stabilize the fragile democracies of the Southern Bank of the Mediterranean, in particular:

- supporting direct access to the Common Market, which would push forward the reforms in those countries, increasing governance effectiveness and stability;
- enhance public private cooperation to ensure capacity building and a more geographically equitable investment plan in those regions;
- encourage strategic partnerships between local banks and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, in order to support private entrepreneurship;
- encourage the transition and conversion to social functions of the armies in those countries, through specific capacity building programmes;
- calls for an immediate process of creation of the Med Macro Region, in order to gather all these objectives and tools within one coherent instrument.

### **The Med Macro Region**

Neighbouring policy is a crucial asset to link Europe to the context in which it lives. And Macro-regions are a crucial asset in neighbouring policy. It is striking that the most useful Macro-region, the Med Macro Region, is still not operating.

It is our main goal to give a robust start to the process, through a renewed effort for gathering civil society and institutional actors - at local, national and supranational levels - to work together on strategies, priorities, and projects for a rapid implementation of the Med Macro Region.

It is widely recognized that a better coordination between programmes and funds related to a same topic is a necessary condition to improve



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their efficiency. The lack of coordination observed during 2007-2013 could be solved during the programming period 2014-2020.

The macro-regional approach could help implement better coordination. Macro-regions, indeed, aim at improving governance schemes on a set of specific policies and priorities, by putting in place integrated framework and funds and addressing common challenges to countries located in a same geographical area. Although some macro-regions are currently experienced (Baltic Sea Region, Danube Region, Adriatic and Ionian Region), a number of questions remain for the Mediterranean: do the first experiences of macro-regions constitute a new model? Are there obvious rationales to initiate a Mediterranean macroregion?

How would it articulate with existing Mediterranean policies and instruments?

This paper does not advocate for the creation of a Mediterranean macro-region as such, but for a better coordination between different programmes dealing with sustainable urban models and the pooling of some resources, working *towards* a Mediterranean macroregional approach application.

At EU Med level, a transnational and multilevel coordination – if linked to a precise monitoring of objectives and actions – could produce a wider and more effective alignment among the actions of the EU, its Mediterranean Member States and sub-national governments. In particular, a transnational and multilevel coordination as such could also be turned into mainstream dynamics/actions through the use of European Structural and Investment Funds on the territories, thus improving the impact of the ETC on the ground and the benefits for the citizens and for the market.

For this reason, in order to impulse a movement towards a better coordination, the following proposals can be made:

- Identify the actors dealing with urban planning in each General Directorate of the European Commission and the responsible people for funding programmes related to this topic (CIUDAD, URBACT, URBAN INITIATIVE, CIP, Horizon 2020, ICT, EIB, ERDF, etc.);
- Launch a direct dialogue between these different stakeholders and the MED programme authorities;
- Find synergies in the implementation of programmes financed by the Cohesion Policy, the European Neighbourhood Policy and Pre-Adhesion Instruments, as the Commission clearly encouraged it
- Test the elaboration, launch, monitoring and evaluation of joint calls for projects based on common framework and priorities, as, for instance, the ones defined in the present document;
- Agree on amounts and coordination modalities to define the shared contribution of the programmes to transnational cooperation actions related to correspondent priorities



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and topics.

Above EU programmes, within each State, the different national, regional and local authorities should also better coordinate the different schemes managed by diverse administrative bodies.

*A better coordination, acting towards a Mediterranean macro-region, could then in a first step pass through the launching of joint calls for projects by the MED programme and the other EU programmes dealing with sustainable urban models and an agreement on budget amounts dedicated to targeted priorities.*



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