



URBAN EMPATHY, Work Package 4, Phase 3

New programming period and Mediterranean macro-region

Recommendations

1. Introduction

European territorial cooperation is entering a new programming period phase. After 2007-2013, 2014-2020 will keep on promoting cooperation, synergies and exchanges between stakeholders of specific geographical areas. Nevertheless, the new territorial cooperation programmes will have to draw the lessons of the previous period in order to launch calls for projects targeting better the issues that local actors are facing in their territories.

This set of recommendations aims at contributing to the improvement of coherence and effectiveness of this new programming period for the Mediterranean area. In particular, these propositions focus on Sustainable Urban Models which should be promoted in the future calls and the implementation of a macroregional approach.

These propositions are based on the results of activities implemented by partners all over the URBAN EMPATHY project, in particular the structured dialogue undertaken in each partner territory with decision-makers (WP3-2) and the organization of working sessions aiming at increasing the Mediterranean added value of cooperation projects related to urban sustainability (WP4-1).

2. Expectations and needs of decision-makers

Decision-makers from the diverse Mediterranean countries share a number of expectations and needs that relate to the territorial level, among them:

- A real need for **improving metropolitan governance**, joint decision-making by a shared vision of urban space, better use of existing tools for financial cooperation between the various economic actors to allow the exploitation of new funding mechanisms. The regional level is considered in most countries and by policy-makers as the appropriate level for the implementation of urban policies, including rural inter-lands.
- A need of **expertise in public administration**, particularly for complex projects, the need for a single regulatory update, but also for the implementation of European directives on the subject of urban sustainability and urban regeneration.
- A need to **create a stronger link** between the European strategies and local and international actors in order to avoid the isolation of small communities and local lobbies.
- A need to **improve the participation of the cultural environment and creativity**, private actors and associations, and to build capacity for innovation.

- A need of **political commitment on the long term**: administrations are confronted with priorities and objectives that are defined in political terms in the short term and consequently highlight the lack of political commitment in the long term. The continuity of the public service is not guaranteed. The long-term commitments (eg : sustainable urban development plan for 10 years and more) are not the priority of political mandates, although it is necessary to overcome sectorial conflicts.
- At all levels of decision and in most countries, it is highlighted that countries and local authorities face **funding problems** in a time of economic crisis and a **lack of competence** and expertise in "rigid " governments.

3. Decision-makers and the European Union

The European institutions must be seen as a cultural and civic entity and not just as an actor who can finance programs. For this, it needs to be more convincing in the implementation of directives such as on urban sustainability, and less rigid in the bureaucratic process, "simpler" and less specialized. In particular, the following statements have been made:

- It is widely recognized that the objectives set by the European institutions are very ambitious. This constraint is considered necessary to move on very complex areas requiring medium and long term processes. European legislation is not considered a problem or a brake. **It gives strong guidance, recommendations and common objectives.** It is the regulatory instability and multiplicity of standards and texts that may pose difficulties to Member States.
- However, **EU legislation on spatial planning is considered as insufficient.** There is a lack of common approach, like the policies already implemented in the fields of environment, water, social responsibility, etc.
- **Regulation** represents another constraint: it is compulsory for the territories and businesses, but jeopardize the comparative and then competitive advantage of European territories. Complexity and number of regulations should then be reduced and the bureaucratic path at all administrative levels be optimized. The key associated challenges identified are:
 - The adoption of European directives, the implementation of European standards and the lack of strategic projects
 - The "too" sectorial approach of EU directives
 - The distance between the EU and local levels of government
 - The lack of concreteness in the implementation of European directives
 - The legal and administrative incentive of European directives
 - The application of the EU rules on air quality and waste management

- The lack of integrated EU policy (including interventions in urban areas) is one of the causes of **segmentation of production solutions and financing proposed by the EU**.
- Actors may encounter difficulties in **the implementation and use of EU funds** because of administrative procedures (reporting and monitoring costs). It is also often linked to **poor coordination between the administrative authorities**. Also, strengthening the role of local and regional authorities by increasing resources and institutional responsibilities may be an answer to a better implementation of EU funds, closer to citizens' concerns.
- There is the risk of the creation of a "two-tier Europe". A special fund for countries could be set up, in order to assist them in the implementation of climate change mitigation projects, allowing all countries of the EU to achieve their environmental objectives.

4. Priorities of Sustainable Urban Development in the Mediterranean for the new programming period

In the past programming period, more focus was on agriculture. The only programme that focused on urban issues was CIUDAD Programme. In the new programming period, sustainable urban development should be prioritized taking into account all MED specificities.

In general terms, the development of cooperation between administrations at different levels (national, regional and local) and policies should be developed.

Three main areas related to sustainable urban models have been identified as priorities for the new programming period: quality of life, smart city development and going beyond urban.

- **Quality of life**

The following topics related to the quality of life should be promoted by the future calls for projects:

- **Put the city at the heart of European projects:** Urban is a marginal issue in the European calls for proposals (except the CIUDAD and URBACT programmes). Through the European projects, an offer on sustainable cities could be developed, to assist the most vulnerable using techniques and technological responses to reduce urban inequalities.
- Development of new business models to move towards a model of sustainable and healthy Mediterranean city.

- **Policies targeting young people and future generations** to make urban policies more innovative and less conservative; education and training; enhancement of national centres of excellence.
 - **Air quality improvement.**
 - **Management and prevention of natural disasters** (floods, forest fires and earthquakes): observation capacities, norms, technics and cooperation between stakeholders to reduce vulnerability of MED regions to natural risk should be improved.
 - **Climate change** adaptation, risk prevention and management.
 - **Urban renewal policies** such as the control of uses and functions in areas of high interest such as historical centres, or the energy renovation of buildings.
 - Transport of people and goods, economic convergence and inequalities reduction in Europe.
 - Strengthening mechanisms for **controlling pollution and illegal construction** in protected areas and monitor compliance with the regulations.
 - **Waste management** Improvement.
 - Effective **immigration policies.**
- **Smart city (energy, water, waste, traffic)**

The concepts of sustainable / creative cities are considered as appropriate by a number of decision-makers. Research and Innovation (open data, availability of data) are essential for cities. For example, offering logistics and transport energy efficiency platforms and policies for public sustainable urban regeneration. This has to be moderated, otherwise, the risk that these concepts create exclusions / fracture zones between urban spaces would come true. Calls for projects should focus on:

- Business investment in innovation and research, urban competitiveness
- Links and synergies between enterprises, R&D centers and higher education
- Innovation capacities, competitiveness and internationalization of SMEs confronted to international cooperation.
- Cooperation between actors (R & B)
- Sectors representing important job potential (blue and green sectors)
- Social innovation and Open Data

- **Going Beyond Urban**

An integrated vision of rural and urban areas, that would maintain specific features of each one of them, without exporting the urban way of life in rural areas, should be developed. This could pass through:

- The development of local products and services
- The durability and protection of natural and cultural heritage

- The creativity related to production processes, equipment and intangible infrastructure to avoid isolation of certain areas

5. Towards a Mediterranean 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 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 macro-region? 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 macro-regional 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 made¹:

- 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.);

¹ These proposals are inspired from the Policy Paper elaborated in August 2014 by ELIH-Med and MARIE projects.

- 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 (cf. proposition dated 14/03/12²);
- 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 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.

² Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal. 14/03/12
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/pdf/2014/proposals/regulation/etc/etc_proposal_en.pdf