

POLICY DECLARATION ON BUILDING PARTNERSHIP IN CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

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ENPI, IPA as well as the Third Objective of the Cohesion Policy will represent **a new framework of opportunities** capable of triggering an enhanced political role for Mediterranean regions and local authorities. Nevertheless, the exploitation of these opportunities will depend on **the active participation of regions and local authorities in the process of creating effective partnerships.**

The partnership principle is an end in itself constituting an expression of democratic values, as well as being instrumental to improving the efficacy of local development strategies. It forms part of the Action Plans established under the Neighbourhood Policy and of the pre-accession process.

Common development of the Mediterranean depends on the adoption of the partnership principle by institutions, at different levels and among the diverse countries of the basin, **in programming** cross-border strategies. It implies embracing vertical and horizontal subsidiarity, decentralisation and democratisation processes, participatory development and a bottom-up approach, and fostering ownership and trust among partners. In this sense, it is **very demanding at the political level** and is capable of having a significant impact on **building development, democracy and peace** in the Mediterranean countries.

The partnership principle is **also very demanding in terms of the implementation of cross-border interventions**, particularly due to the different political, social and economic contexts of Mediterranean countries.

If based on weak and fragmented partnerships, the CBC programmes under ENPI and IPA risk **having a weak impact** on common development in the Mediterranean. Between 2000 to 2006, the INTERREG programme helped build the first territorial cooperation infrastructure in the Mediterranean, giving birth to projects that made it possible to set up efficacious cooperation in strategic sectors such as the environment, accessibility, sustainable tourism etc. In general, as an instrument of regional development in the EU, INTERREG led to the creation of relationships between Southern, Eastern and Northern Mediterranean partners and the building of key actor networks in the different areas, but without being able to assure their lasting and sustainable impact on common development.

The COMPART project has identified the following critical areas from the INTERREG experience:

- **Exogenous constraints** represented by the different political scenarios (decentralisation process), intercultural problems, economic and social gaps, the increasing mistrust of Southern Mediterranean countries in EU external assistance policies, the increasing fear of a so-called “clash of civilisations” within the EU, as well as a rise in illegal migration flows and the resurgence of conflicts in the Mediterranean area; and
- **Endogenous constraints** of the INTERREG programme structure, which is considered too complex, fragmented and not results-oriented by stakeholders. The latter have also lamented the weak impact of activities implemented on local development. This is especially true for external partners, whose involvement has been limited to project implementation. Moreover, no evaluation has been conducted on the impact of this kind of intervention. The programming process in INTERREG has encountered problems of access, due also to the

insufficient capacity of diverse stakeholders to effectively take part in it. In turn, capacity problems are also related to territorial disparities and differences between urban capitals, country centres and rural areas.



The new CBC programmes under ENPI and IPA should build on previous experience to overcome the acknowledged limitations and the abovementioned constraints. The instruments offer a new framework of cooperation overcoming external and internal divisions for the achievement of common benefits. Southern and Eastern Mediterranean partners will have access to joint programming, joint structures, joint project implementation and to a single basket of funding.

In light of the above, the partners of the COMPART project

commit themselves to:

- **Opening up the access of** stakeholders to the joint programming process and to project formulation, through the establishment of **new communications instruments, of working groups on specific issues** and, more generally, through the application of a more proactive strategy towards the territories in question;
- Increasing **institution and capacity-building** of the various stakeholders (especially of small cities and rural local authorities);
- Negotiating the **concentration of CBC resources in integrated projects** in order to improve the impact on sustainable development in the Mediterranean;
- Implementing **ex-post evaluation** on project impacts and **developing mechanisms** to improve CBC programmes with the involvement of stakeholders;
- **Integrating** CBC projects into local/regional and national development plans, sharing strategies with central governments from the outset and opening up local networks to the participation of central actors;
- Promoting **city-to-city cooperation** networks and the **participation of rural areas**, according to the principles of territorial cohesion and polycentric development; and
- Ensuring greater **participation of political representatives in CBC programmes** and promoting new modes of governance, for example, through the creation of **Medregions**;

and **request a political commitment from central governments and the European Commission to:**

- **implement real partnerships** in CBC programmes with regional and local authorities. This should enable the sharing of priorities and methodologies which are necessary preconditions to improving the impact of CBC as well as decentralisation and democratisation processes;
- **open up** access of stakeholders to the multi-level and joint programming process through the setting up of **new communications instruments and of multi-level working groups on specific issues**;

- support initiatives for the **institution and capacity-building** of the various stakeholders, and in particular establish a **specific twinning sub-programme** within the CBC programmes to support the active involvement of **geographically remote stakeholders and small and rural cities** and the creation of networks;
- **complement and coordinate** with multilateral (for instance, the UNDP Art Gold Mediterranean programme), bilateral and decentralised cooperation programmes. Furthermore, external coherence of CBC programmes should be established **in the Country Strategy Papers and Action Plans** prepared under the Neighbourhood Policy, as well as in the Multiannual Indicative Planning Document under IPA;
- **improve programming methodology** to increase the participation of local stakeholders and the sharing of objectives through specific territorial diagnostic analysis and the facilitation of networking between territorial actors;
- support territorial cohesion and polycentric development principles, establishing a **criterion** which gives **preference** to CBC projects which involve **outlying territories and their stakeholders** significantly;
- **make serious efforts to feed back results of (ex-post) evaluations into future planning phases**. In this regard, the creation of **thematic multi-level working groups** to monitor and evaluate actions and to feed the results back into planning could be encouraged;
- support specific **city-to-city cooperation** networks, since the competencies of city authorities in different Mediterranean countries are quite similar;
- **strengthen the governance and coordination capacities of Steering Committees** on strategic programming and monitoring/evaluation, in order to develop results-oriented CBC. In order to achieve this aim, regular and **periodic multi-level conferences** could be held for each joint programme, to raise the political profile of the partnership, strengthen the ownership of CBC outcomes and identify strategic actions to be implemented; and
- **support CBC** by strengthening **the link** between territorial cooperation and national development plans and by encouraging **decentralisation reforms through** dedicated policy and pragmatic dialogue between EU Member States and the central governments of Mediterranean partners.