

Sustainability actions in Mediterranean countries through cooperation partnerships: the case of the project PAMLED

T. Daddi¹, F. Farro², S. Vaglio³, G. Bartoli¹ & F. Iraldo^{1,4}

¹*Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies, Italy*

²*Department for the Relations with the European Union,
Municipality of Prato, Italy*

³*Laboratory of Anthropology and Ethnology, University of Florence,
Italy*

⁴*Institute for Environmental and Energy Policy and Economics,
Bocconi University, Italy*

Abstract

In recent years the involvement of the Third Mediterranean Countries in achieving the environmental policy objectives set up by the European Union have become more and more important. There have been several programs of cooperation with co-fund activities and actions to improve the state of the environment of Third Mediterranean partners in order to achieve a global improvement of the environment. This paper aims to present the results of the project PAMLED, which was co-funded by the Med-Pact Programme of the EU. The project will complete its course at the end of April and it aims to develop and strengthen the capabilities of three Mediterranean cities (City of Marrakech, Morocco, Sin El Fil, Lebanon and Bodrum, Turkey) in managing and promoting their local sustainable development, as well as implementing innovative different action fields. The strengthening of the capabilities of these Mediterranean partners was mainly based on 'collective learning', achieved by the constitution of partnerships with five European partners (the municipalities of Prato, Lucca, Brtonigla, Rio Marina and Skopje). The needs and priorities of each Mediterranean partner were identified and pilot actions were specifically elaborated in order to promote the sustainable development and the exploitation of local resources, with particular respect to environmental protection, the enhancement of local tangible and intangible assets, economic support and



overall sustainable development. The paper will show the outputs of several pilot actions carried out in the three Mediterranean cities involved. The Municipality of Bodrum carried out innovative pilot actions in the field of urban waste management; Sin El Fil developed a pilot project titled “Youth development plan”, while the City of Marrakech carried out a pilot project aimed at sensitizing the local communities and the actors of the touristic sector (e.g. hotels, hammams) on the importance of reducing water consumption.

Keywords: sustainable development, Mediterranean Third countries, European Neighbourhood Policy, local development cooperation, Project PAMLED, Med-Pact Programme.

1 Introduction

The Mediterranean is the largest European sea, shared by 460 million people living in its 22 countries and territories and it is visited by some 275 million more every year. According to the 2009 UNEP/Plan Bleu [1], the shores of the Mediterranean basin account for 5.7% of the world's land mass, 7% of the world's population and 12% of the world's GDP. However, despite its richness, the Mediterranean region represents one of the most vulnerable environments in the world, also accounting for 60% of the world's “water-poor” population and 8% of global carbon dioxide emissions. Sustainable development is a global objective for the Mediterranean countries.

The Mediterranean coastal regions are also the part of the basin, which has undergone the most dramatic alterations due to the rapid change of demographic trends, the new socio-economic conditions prevailing (which favour higher consumption of natural resources), and also due to new technologies, including transport (new roads, new types of ships, new harbours, etc) [2]. In addition, an increasing waste production and pollution, closely related to a conspicuous loss in biodiversity, was evidenced [3]. A greater commitment in the reduction of inequalities and also in assisting the poor countries' development was emphasized and expected at a global level [4]. Moreover, the need to change unsustainable production and consumption patterns was warmly advised in order to protect and manage natural resources sustainably, to safeguard health and integrate the objective of sustainable development more effectively into the process of globalization, as confirmed by the Marrakech process [5, 6].

The Mediterranean countries, mostly the regions of the South and East, can plan and manage their development in a sustainable perspective. The potential increase in environmental pressures on Mediterranean coastal regions over the coming 20 years is considerable, particularly in the tourist sector: Indeed, tourism has induced an increase not only in transport, but also in urban development and sprawl, energy infrastructures, etc [7]. In addition, a continued spread of unsustainable production and consumption patterns is likely to increase the environmental costs dramatically, which already account for 3-5% of the GDP [8]. The environment should not be considered as an additional constraint, but as a driving force, an asset and an incentive to improve local development [9].



The Mediterranean peoples are now much more aware of the threats to their environment and their unique natural and cultural heritage, as evidenced by the high number of policies that have been adopted in almost all Mediterranean countries in order to provide specific solutions to these problems [10]. Most Mediterranean economies, which have been insufficiently dynamic in the last 20-30 years compared to other regions of the world, today are experiencing critical level of unemployment (ranging between 8% and 25%). Social issues are also a major concern, particularly in the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries: in spite of progress, they are still backward in terms of literacy and gender equality. The pattern of economic growth of the Mediterranean Partner Countries is increasingly reliant on the ability of their industrial activities to face up to the competitive challenges of the EU markets, by complying with increasingly high quality standards and performance requirements. On the one hand, this is curbing a phenomenon known as the Kuznets curve, which explains how the increase in production and economic output of a country can lead to a corresponding increase in the polluting emissions and resource consumption, particularly in the early phases of the industrial development process. Therefore, the industrial growth is deemed to negatively impact on the environment. On the other hand, in order to be fully integrated in the economy of the Developed Countries and have access to the EU market at socially acceptable conditions, the industrial production of the Mediterranean countries, and the products they offer, must increasingly comply not only with performance and quality standards, but also with environmental quality requirements.

The challenge of globalization requires widespread regional cooperation, political stability, efficient governance and social protection. Yet the situation of the Mediterranean countries in fulfilling these conditions is very asymmetrical. The Mediterranean European Countries are facing the challenges of globalization with the strong backing of the EU. The southern and eastern Mediterranean countries, which are of course faced with the same challenges of globalization, do not benefit from such dynamic regional cooperation. Established in 1995, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership still needs a collective vision of sustainable development, besides appropriate resources and commitment [11]. This situation is closely related both to the inadequate levels of North-South and South-South cooperation and also to the continuing conflicts, especially in the Near East, even though some longer-term political solutions appear to be emerging. If the relevant reforms will not be quickly implemented, the differences between the two shores of the Mediterranean will result in growing instability and may accentuate the existing levels of social and economic asymmetry. A possible alternative is to maximize complementarities and opportunities between the North and the South, in the context of joint and differentiated processes of sustainable development, to optimize the positive effects of globalization. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) could be the right direction [12–14]. The ENP seeks to deepen political cooperation and economic integration between the EU and its immediate neighbours and to promote and support better governance and reform in Mediterranean countries. Through mutually agreed Action Plans and cooperation projects, the EU and its ENP partners will address issues of



common interest and devise measures beneficial to economic growth and social cohesion, raising living standards and protecting the environment, thereby contributing to the long-term goal of sustainable development in the Mediterranean region [15].

2 Project PAMLED – background

The Mediterranean basin possesses a wide range of different and frequently critical socio-political, economical and environmental assets, thus strengthening cooperation among the Mediterranean countries to support their development, offers an effective tool to promote and enhance their natural, cultural, economic promotion and local sustainable development pursue. In this general framework the Project PAMLED (“Building Effective Partnerships among European and Mediterranean Municipalities for Local Economic Development Promotion”) was conceived in 2006 and carried out since.

The Project PAMLED is co-financed by the European Commission within the funding lines of the Med-Pact Programme (“Local Authorities Partnership Programme in the Mediterranean”) in an amount of €450,000 to promote the cooperation among Mediterranean countries (overall amount €562,500 of all partners co-financing).

Taking into account the peculiarities of the different partners involved, the Project PAMLED aimed to develop and strengthen the capability of three Mediterranean partners (the City of Marrakech, Morocco, and of the Municipalities of Sin El Fil, Lebanon and Bodrum, Turkey) to manage and promote their local development, and also to implement innovative ways to respond to their problems and issues in different action fields (i.e. “Planning and Management” and “City Marketing”). The strengthening of the Mediterranean partners’ capabilities was achieved by applying a principle of ‘collective learning’, by establishing lasting partnerships with five European partners (Municipalities of Prato, Lucca, Brtonigla, Rio Marina and the City of Skopje), as well as exchanging the most significant experiences and expertises gained in the two abovementioned macro sectors by the European partners. Needs and priorities of each Mediterranean partner were previously identified, and specific pilot actions elaborated in order to contribute to a sustainable development and exploitation of local resources. In this context, the proactive involvement of the civil society played an important role to implement the pilot projects, contributing to bring in added value to the whole PAMLED. Particular care regarded the promotion of environmental protection, the enhancement of local tangible (environment, cultural heritage, planning and promoting of economic potentialities, etc) and intangible (culture, traditions, etc) assets.

In the following sections we will detail the different pilot projects carried out by the three Mediterranean partners, and the main results achieved in different fields of action.

In designing the pilot initiatives a central issue attained the bridging of the gap between theory and practice while focusing on priority issues for the Mediterranean partners. This approach intended to avoid an inefficient



overlapping with existing national or international interventions and to integrate them with other actions already being implemented in each of the three territories.

In fact, a process of validation of the pilot projects as proposed by the Mediterranean partners was necessarily carried out. It involved the representatives of the local authorities, through a participatory approach with all other potential stakeholders and actors of each territory, and the implementation of visits of technical assistance by the PAMLED teams of the European Partners.

2.1 Youth development strategy in Sin El Fil (Lebanon)

In Lebanon, as a consequence of the Taif agreements of 1989, that represented the end of the civil war after more than 20 years, an administrative reform to assist a process of decentralization of administrative competencies between the central and municipal levels of government has been envisaged among the necessary steps to support the return to normalization of the Country.

The administrative reform focused on the importance of decentralization to allow a wider participation and empower local authorities to manage their territories and reach the citizens compared to the policies implemented by the central government level. Unfortunately, this reform has not entered into force yet despite the various laws and the pressures by national and international stakeholders. It means that the typical functions often granted to the local authorities (municipalities are around 950 in a country of less than 4 million inhabitants) are often managed by the central government, thus creating a dysfunction in the distribution and management of financial and economic resources, an overlap of competences among the various levels of government that tends to remove the responsibility and legitimacy of local administrators on their political-technical decisions. Besides, this approach tends also to cause a sense of detachment of citizens from their own Municipality that is not considered as a central reference for public services, but rather a mere “tax-collector”, and a bestower of incomprehensible bureaucratic procedures.

As highlighted also by the OMSAR [16], the lack of professionals and skilled civil servants is also one of the main obstacles to the application of the administrative reform in a country that highly demands decentralization to meet the needs of all citizens despite their religious belonging.

In this framework, the Municipality of Sin el Fil (metropolitan area of Beirut), represents a good exception to this scenario. The actions promoted by its pilot project demonstrated that it is possible to start-up administrative and strategic reforms to work in a more pro-active way for the wellbeing of the community.

When stressing its priorities within the PAMLED, the Municipality of Sin El Fil focused to review its economic potentiality and planning, while working strategically to support the growth of specific economic categories.

Initially, the Municipality of Sin El Fil intended to propose an ambitious pilot project aimed at setting up a Youth Business Incubator. In fact, due to the length of the administrative procedures needed to identify the suitable building and allocating the necessary internal human resources to manage the initiative, the Municipality, in consultancy with its European Partners and technical experts,



agreed to re-define its original plan to respond to the economic needs of its young population, by planning a mid-long-term urban and social strategy, instead.

Therefore, Sin El Fil defined its Pilot Project in the field of economic development and strategic planning by focusing on youth entrepreneurship as an approach to reduce the current flow of brain-drain affecting its territory. The plan is based on a similar approach experienced by the Municipalities of Prato, Skopje and Brtonigla, where similar “Youth Action Plans” have been experienced in Croatia and Skopje in the years 2000, and in Prato since 2006, taking into consideration the different socio-political and historical backgrounds of these areas.

To achieve its goal, the Municipality of Sin El Fil required a multi-direction strategy targeting potential young entrepreneurs drafted in an *ad hoc* business opportunity plan comprising three fields of action: i. Social Economic Analysis in Sin El Fil Baldeh (one of the four suburbs of Sin El Fil); ii. Local Development Youth Plan; iii. Youth in Business (Open Competition on the Best Business Ideas).

Applying the same city-to-city partnership approach envisaged by PAMLED, the technical staff of the Municipality of Prato and of the City of Skopje accompanied Sin El Fil to start-up its pilot project that outlined a youth entrepreneurship strategy as an approach to reduce the brain drain in the area; as well as identifying the bases of a future comprehensive strategic plan focusing on their socio-economic development.

The city-to-city approach offered good practices on models that provide resources, support and opportunities in the areas of employment and education, helping youth identifying their skills, preparing for job interviews and entering the job market. Great emphasis was given to the importance of communicating to youth and to spread the voice about the competition at local level. This was a crucial element with meetings being organized among the municipality, universities and high schools to motivate students to participate. It represented an important action to be carried out in a context where usually there is a huge need for bridging local communities with their administrators.

The direct beneficiaries targeted by the Pilot Project included: 2,800 households interviewed and monitored; 1,200 business stakeholders interviewed and monitored; around 50-60 young people involved; citizens’ associations, local economic stakeholders involved; the University of Lebanon; the Municipality of Sin El Fil internal staff (18 councillors, 40 administrative/technical staff); the municipal staff of the Cultural Centre (around 10 staff members).

Specifically, the activities carried out envisaged: *Action 1 - On-field data collection to assess Sin El Fil Baldeh social-economic situation* - drafting of questionnaires and software development to analyse the data collected, selection and training of the interviewers, a communication plan addressed to the community; *Action 2 - Development of the Local Development Youth Plan* - an analysis of the social-economic outputs, the identification of specific actions on entrepreneurship, community meetings to facilitate the participation; *Action 3 - Youth in Business* - to appoint a Supervising Tutor, map of the business sectors



in Sin El Fil, establish a technical Coordination Board to support the Municipality in managing and monitoring the action; opening of a public Call for Proposal on Business Competition for Young Entrepreneurs (providing ad hoc training of the applicants, selection of the Best Business Ideas and an initial financial support of 1,500 US Dollars to start-up their businesses).

The main outputs, strengths and weaknesses can be summarised as follows: 1) Sin El Fil ensured a strong level of participation and capability to involve and mobilize the territory and stakeholders (youth/local entrepreneurs, etc), demonstrating an in-depth knowledge of the priorities and needs of the population, far beyond the responsibilities actually assigned to local authorities in Lebanon. This approach convinced Sin El Fil to co-finance the project from the Municipal budget, even if it was not required by the project itself.

Moreover, great efforts were made to “bridge” the local community with the local administration and attention was paid to ensure that the community involved benefited by the project, although with great difficulty since citizens do not expect this kind of approach from their Municipality.

A positive outcome resulted also in the high involvement of the local technical stakeholders (local enterprises, local business men, local universities, etc) who had not been targeted initially, but accepted to become part of it.

Meanwhile, the socio-economic mapping of the suburb of Baldeh in Sin El Fil offered a good response with 60% of households answering the questionnaires drafted by the Municipality in co-operation with sociologists and social workers, despite people’s scepticism towards the Municipal officers, in a country where the last population census applied in 1932.

A weak element has been noticed in the poor involvement and awareness of the central government towards the efforts made by its municipalities. In future, specific actions to attract the interest of the central government levels should be envisaged to reinforce the institutional aspects and guarantee sustainability and eventually the possibility to replicate this kind of project in other parts of the country. However, there are positive elements to consider the Project’s multiplier effects and sustainability. In fact, the municipal officers developed a solid capacity to manage their economic potentiality and care about the social needs of the community in strategic terms, planning for the medium/long-term, rather than coping with the management of the municipal problems through “spot actions”. They actors involved experienced new skills in project management and in approaching their local community; coordinating their efforts internally, and promoting them externally in the territory. The *motto* became “we, the Municipality, are here for you”.

2.2 Development plan of environmental communication to sensitize citizens on water consumption in Marrakech (Morocco)

The Urban District of Marrakech, extended over an area of 190.42 km² and with a population of 877,500 inhabitants in 2003, is a decentralized territorial entity with legal status and financial autonomy. The City of Marrakech has been managed by a single Municipality (Municipal Charter of 1976). Marrakech is located in the region of Marrakech-Tensift-Al Haouz, one of the 16 regions of



Morocco. Before 1992 the urban district of Marrakech was unified (Municipality of Marrakech), while between 1992 and 2002 the City of Marrakech was composed of five urban districts: the Municipality of Guéliz Menara, the Municipality of Medina, the Municipality of Méchouar Kashba, the Municipality of Ennakhil, the Municipality of Sidi Youssef Ben Ali and of another urban district.

In June 2007 the City of Marrakech achieved the environmental certification ISO14001:04, as the first African city and of the Arab world to have implemented an EMS certificate by an accredited third party organization, through an international project funded by the European Commission, within the LIFE-Third-Country Programme titled “Marrakemas”.

According to the policies undertaken at the local and national level, and in light of the results obtained during the previous stages of the Project PAMLED, the pilot project, entitled “Development plan of environmental communication to sensitize citizens and carrying out of a sample of actions envisaged by the plan in the district of Guéliz of Marrakech” was drafted and implemented. The main objectives of the proposed pilot action were to contribute to the environmental education of the population for a sustainable and rational use of water (such as the decrease of water losses both in public and private spheres, the development of processes for the control of water consumption) by carrying out a public awareness campaign, and promoting eco-sustainable tourism encouraging the use of sustainable resources (particularly water). These objectives were in line with the evidenced needs to spread a new culture aimed at the respect for the environment and with a sustainable use of resources. The pilot actions were implemented in a selected district of the Marrakech city, the suburb of Guéliz, chosen on the bases of the results of an analytical study, carried out by the City administration in association with a local institute of technical expertise (Energy Concept srl) in 2007 and 2008. The pilot actions were particularly addressed to the citizens of the suburb, its main public service companies and local actors that play an important role in the most characteristic and water management impacting sectors (Riads owners, Guest houses, Moorish Baths, Schools, Handicraft Trades, the RADEEMA, Companies delegated to clean the water basin, Associations for environmental protection in the district of Guéliz). The implementation of this pilot project profited of the suitable partnership with the city of Lucca (Italy), thanks to its experience in the sustainable use of resources, and also to its traditional environmental engagement. Moreover, Lucca had already been partner with Marrakech in the city certification-process. The fact of having once again a partnership with Lucca can be viewed as a way to ensure and reinforce the continuity of the environmental process by controlling the most important environmental aspects, in this case not only on the level of the Municipality, but even at the level of the city. Thanks to the implementation of the pilot project, some interesting results have been achieved.

Firstly, a better knowledge of the use of waters and of the higher pressure sectors in terms of water consumption and the identification of specific measures and action for a sustainable management of waters. This result was obtained by distributing specific questionnaires, and by implementing specific systems to



monitor and measure the water consumption. The implementation of these devices permitted to regulate the flow of undeclared wells near the water basin. The implementation of the pilot project resulted also in an increased awareness and perception of the water problem by citizens and stakeholders alike, thanks to an efficient awareness campaign with public stands, posters, door-to-door leaflets. This action resulted also in an increased mobilization and awareness of some local actors around the water problem. Long-term results will comprise also a decrease in water costs and the extension of this water management model on the whole town or on other areas.

2.3 Waste management and tourism development in Bodrum Marina (Turkey)

Thanks to the mechanism of “city-to-city partnership”, developed under the Project PAMLED with the Municipality of Lucca (Italy), the Municipality of Bodrum carried out also a pilot project titled “Environmental Awareness Action Plan”.

At this purpose, first of all a decision was made to determine the target area: with this objective the area between the Marina and the Castle was selected as the project area. This area was considered ultimately suitable for information and awareness campaigns since the local population use this area intensively, allowing visual and informative materials to create higher performance results. The area had been visited to quantitatively determine the number of users, the waste collection potential resulting from the waste production by its users, and the number of bins, containers, depots and collection bags available. Then, a decision was made to determine the necessary quantities and costs in cooperation with the garbage collection company to place special-design bins adhering to ease-of-use and city safety rules to collect vegetable oil waste in the target area containing numerous restaurants and daily tour boats. Collectors have been involved in decisions through a process of holding regular meetings with the technical team of the local Municipality. Although it was mandatory according to the Turkish “Regulation on the Control of Packaging Waste”, due to the lack of people’s habits on waste differentiation and collection at the source, it was decided to add statements about penal provisions if incurring in violations of the rules and regulations, on all brochures and fliers distributed to boats and residences and, moreover, to clarify the article of Law applicable in this case. An operation concluded by consulting with the Municipal Legal Department.

Successively the following activities were carried out: (i) informative and awareness raising efforts were carried on by using local mass media (radios, TV, newspapers); (ii) communication channels - including billboards, warning signs, bulk mobile text messages and e-mail messages - were used in addition to special information and warning brochures; (iii) special informative campaigns were carried out towards residences, restaurants and boats, progress and development were determined on site through regular visits and, moreover, campaigns were carried out in a user-friendly manner; (iv) in order to experience the good practices (approach of city-to-city partnership), the representatives and technical experts of the Municipalities of Bodrum and Lucca visited their respective towns



in 2008 and 2009; (v) press conferences were held to develop awareness among the community on waste solid collection.

Consequently the results of this pilot action can be summarized as follows: (i) drafting of an awareness plan of action on solid waste, recycling and pollution among local people; (ii) establishment of a trend of active participation by local stakeholder in the implementation of pilot project activities; (iii) contribution to the acceleration of the recycled collection activities already started throughout Bodrum.

The pilot project represents a good input for the Cleaning Department which was created in 2005. Until then, in spite of some spot actions, the Department did not have previous opportunities to start up a real recycling policy on the territory. Before the present project had been implemented, only some bins were located in the city, but not a real campaign was possible to support their efficient use. Instead, the current project focused both on the dissemination of proper bins for recycling (material tool) and on the information/awareness aspects of its use. The project is placed in a context in which national authorities are demanding Municipalities to implement recycling process at local level. Therefore, it could represent a good step to give evidence of the municipality skills and to be ready to extend the same activities to other areas of the city. The municipal internal staff was directly involved in the campaigns and local people know them and ask for help when needed. More specifically, the Cleaning Department staff were directly involved in the awareness meetings: this allowed a direct contact between people and the municipal staff. A telephone number is highlighted on the campaign poster and, for instance, people call up when bins are full. Anyway, the most important element of the project regarded the increase of people's awareness. Indeed, it did not focus just on providing bins or the other material disposals but large efforts concentrated on awareness raising tools. The internal staff of the Municipality of Bodrum explained to the population involved how the recycling system was being implementing in order to facilitate its use. The campaigns were being currently implemented both along the Marina and in the schools.

On the other hand, one weak factor regards the current poor financing availability for the Municipality of Bodrum to extend the pilot project to other areas of its territory. Furthermore, a real long-term recycling process is not possible at the moment at local level because of lack of a recycling plant in the Bodrum Peninsula. Even if waste collection would be possible - at least in the area where the pilot project has been implemented - the recycling process has to be reinforced through additional and sustainable financial resources and a sound coordination at regional and national level in Turkey.

3 Conclusion

The bottom-up local development model that encourages integration and synergies at local level, as well as among private, public and civil society actors, had its main *raison d'être* and development in the identification of the content of each Pilot Project, in line with the existing priorities of each territory.



The objective of strengthening the capability of the three involved Mediterranean Municipalities in planning and managing local economic and environmental development initiatives has been achieved by setting up operative and lasting partnerships among the cities involved in the action and implementing pro-active interventions in two specific fields of action: “Planning and management” and “City marketing”. Thematic city-to-city partnerships allowed Municipalities to interface and share problems with other actors operating at the same level and with similar degrees of empowerment. As n-depth institutional analyses were conducted along each Municipality, potentially resulting in the establishment of new approaches and methods to gather local needs and to design local development policies. Procedures and practices for local level resource mobilization and public expenditure management were encouraged.

Developing a new role and a pro-active involvement to address local needs generated new approaches within the internal organization of the Mediterranean partners. Mutually beneficial and collaborative relationships between the European and the Mediterranean partners were initiated through “working groups” and the “city-to-city” networks. Activities that evinced partner potentialities and expertise gained on local development management to be shared with other cities. Furthermore, the PAMLED Scientific Committee bridged the gap among the Municipalities and provided them the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve these goals. Pilot Projects were identified on a proven basis of sustainability. During the pilot actions drafting phase, particular attention was given to single out indicators demonstrating their future sustainability, while Municipalities were encouraged to make out interventions that could fit in other institutional goals or initiatives. Several activities were organized to better incorporate local citizens and stakeholders’ points of view.

Some multipliers effects were pursued (and at least partially reached): dissemination of efficient, innovative and customized practices for local economic development support; positive spill-over effects along other Municipal Departments and other relevant stakeholders; progressive economic integration process; positive indirect employment and income generating effects of the additional people benefiting from outputs and services delivered by the pilot projects.

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