

MEDGOVERNANCE/MEDREPORT

MEDGOVERNANCE PROJECT

**ACTIVITY 3-1: ANALYSIS OF EURO-MEDITERRANEAN
GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK**

MEDITERRANEAN GOVERNANCE REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

April 2010

Report coordinated by Jean-Claude Tourret and Vincent Wallaert, Institut de la Méditerranée

BACKGROUND: THE MEDGOVERNANCE PROJECT

The MEDGOVERNANCE project was implemented in the framework of the MED interregional cooperation programme, gathering together 6 regions (Andalusia¹, Catalonia², PACA, Piedmont, Lazio, Tuscany) with their respective research and training institutes (Three Cultures Foundation, Seville; IEMed, Barcelona; Institut de la Méditerranée, Marseille; Paralleli, Turin; CeSPI, Rome; MAEM/MEMA, Florence) and the Inter-Mediterranean Commission of the CPMR. These were assisted in technical matters by Plural (Florence) in putting together policy recommendations on how to best integrate regional authorities in the development and implementation of Mediterranean policies.

The project started in 2009 with a diagnosis phase analyzing the governance framework for the preparation and the implementation of major policies affecting the Mediterranean region in five policy fields: transportation; competitiveness and innovation; environment; culture; and migration. For each of these fields, the issue of “multilevel governance” and, more particularly, of the actual contribution of regions to these policies was investigated. Each research institute participating in the MEDGOVERNANCE project coordinated the preparation of Thematic Reports through transnational working groups involving stakeholders actively engaged in the specific policy fields. The Institut de la Méditerranée has made a transversal analysis of the contributions prepared by it and its project partners, contributions that are presented in this Mediterranean Governance Report (hereafter “Report”).

THE EMERGENCE OF MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

The first section of the Report describes the slow emergence of multilevel governance in the Euro-Mediterranean area. Multilevel governance is caught between two different historical dynamics: on the one hand, the progressive recognition of regions in the European policy-making process and, on the other hand, the establishment and the transformation of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership from the Barcelona Declaration (1995) to the Union for the Mediterranean (UpM, 2007).

Generally speaking, the empowerment of territorial actors at the national and international level means an important change in the way public policies are understood, analyzed, framed and summarized in the concept of *governance*. The notion of governance emerged in the 1980s. It highlighted the growing complexity in the economic, social and political environment, the empowerment of new actors and the interaction of local and national levels with the international. In this context, classical policies were questioned: in particular their ability to coordinate collective actions and to address the new challenges faced by territories, notably trade globalization and the communication and information revolution, were debated. More recently, the concept of *multilevel governance* has emerged. Multilevel governance highlights new relations between national authorities and so-called “sub-national” actors in the preparation, in the implementation but also in the evaluation of public policies and, more generally, collective actions. Territorial entities are widely recognized as being at the right level to address development issues and particularly to integrate the various competences, skills and resources that contributes to the overall “welfare” (or life quality) of a given area.

Researchers, academics, experts and politicians have thus increasingly used the term

¹ Autonomous Government of Andalusia or *Junta de Andalucía*.

² Generalitat of Catalonia or *Generalitat de Catalunya*.

“multilevel governance” to describe these changes. Initially conceptualized within the academic world, multilevel governance has progressively been endorsed as a model of governance by European and international institutions. This “change of paradigm” has also resulted in the mobilization of local and regional authorities in promoting multilevel governance. This process has meant a more important policy-making role for territorial actors and particularly for regional authorities. International organizations (such as the World Bank and the UNDP) have played a key role in the promotion of multilevel governance, offering it up as a key for understanding the difficulties of traditional Governments in handling public policies, but also as an ideological tool able to influence the reorganization of public authorities in both developed and developing countries. The emergence of multilevel governance in academia has been accompanied by a slow internal transformation in policy-making with a greater role for local and regional authorities in the Euro-Mediterranean framework.

The EU has made an important contribution to the emergence and empowerment of regional government in Europe. Different factors have figured in the empowerment of territorial actors within EU policies, including the ever more important “subsidiarity principle”, the shift in the EU policies from a sectorial to a territorial approach (notably the integrated maritime policy) and the political and administrative decentralization experienced by several European countries. The management procedure of Structural Funds has clearly been a powerful factor in the regions’ empowerment within the EU’s institutional framework. With the creation of the Committee of the Regions, the Treaty of Maastricht formally recognized the emerging role of regions within the European Union and has created an official representative body for local and regional authorities at the very heart of EU policy-making. Similarly, since the creation of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, local and regional authorities have shown a strong interest in participating in its ambitious goals and have asked for a greater role in defining its priorities and its implementation. This strong interest has undeniably affected the Euro-Mediterranean governance framework, from the intergovernmental Barcelona process, to the greater recognition of territorial actors within the Neighborhood Policy (and notably the Cross Border Cooperation Programme), to the Union for the Mediterranean (UpM) and the creation of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Mediterranean Assembly (ARLEM).

During the last twenty years, most EU countries devolved public functions: central government progressively surrendered power over political economy to both supra-national and sub-national institutions. In Italy, France and Spain, radical decentralization took place over three to four decades: the three countries saw national policies giving way, to some extent, to decision-makers at the regional and local level. A similar process, though one that has been implemented at a much slower pace, is also to be observed within the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries. Most countries in the Maghreb and Mashrek have had regional or sub-regional authorities, e.g. *Muhafazat*, for several decades. Furthermore, most of these countries also have local authorities such as the *Qada’a* or, in some cases, their municipalities.

THE REGIONAL CONTRIBUTION TO EUROMED POLICY MAKING

The second section of the Report assesses the effective weight of Mediterranean regional authorities in the first stages of the decision-taking process, namely in agenda setting and policy definition. Among the most striking elements presented in this document, there is an account of the limited impact of the influence tools employed by the regions since the 1970s and the consequent difficulties for regional authorities in benefiting from multilevel governance as it emerged as a European model.

Analyzing the case-studies identified within the first phase of the MEDGOVERNANCE project gives a preliminary view of the intrinsic complexity of the European policy-making process, often compared to a “jigsaw puzzle”. Before assessing the effective impact of regions within EU institutions and procedures, it is necessary to understand how these institutions and procedures are actually being implemented. European policies are more than just the end result of formal decision-making processes. They actually involve a complex range of public and private stakeholders, stakeholders who compete with one another. Some basic assets play a key role in the influence of stakeholders over European policy-making: e.g. political will, time and availability, technical expertise and direct relationships with decision-takers within the different European institutions. Most of the Mediterranean regions are fully aware of this competitive context and have therefore developed professional influence tools and strategies. A multiplicity of specific networks, organizations and initiatives have emerged, to improve the influence of local and regional Mediterranean authorities. Different networks and organizations representing local and regional Mediterranean organizations may be mentioned, from bodies open to all kind of local authorities like the Mediterranean Commission of the United Cities and Local Government (UCLG), to more specific organizations including Arco Latino (gathering provincial authorities) and Medcities (gathering local authorities and municipalities).

These different tools and organizations have achieved significant results in influencing European policy-making. For example, on transport issues, the CPMR has influenced European policy making on two specific topics: the inclusion of the Motorways of the Seas (MoS) in the financial regulation of the Trans-European Networks - Transport (TEN-T) programme: and the establishment of a European coordinator specifically dedicated to the MoS. In both contexts, the CPMR’s lobbying was effective. Nevertheless, it seems that Mediterranean regions still need to professionalize their lobbying instruments. Moreover, the difficulty in reaching a consensus on common strategic goals also undermines the regions’ influence.

THE REGIONALIZATION OF EUROMED POLICIES

The third section of the Report is devoted to the evaluation of the effective role of Mediterranean regional authorities in the implementation of European and Mediterranean policies.

The broad diffusion of the principles of multilevel governance within EU institutions and national governments has reinforced the regions’ participation in what is sometimes called “top-down” policies. Regional authorities have become recognized as relevant implementers for European and national policies.

In this framework, different contributions and positions are to be observed depending on the region. There are regions that directly manage in a style reminiscent of “centralized” governments; and there are other regions that are satisfied to act as catalysts in governance, sharing responsibilities between local, regional and national stakeholders. Another interesting trend is the empowerment of regions in policy fields traditionally dominated by central

government, e.g. migration.

Beyond the empowerment of regional authorities, the implementation of more multilevel governance involves the increased participation of civil society actors in European and national policy realisation. This evolution echoes the call for a more “horizontal society” less dominated by centralized institutions be they European, national or even regional bodies. The case-studies have shown how “horizontal actors” from the private sector and from civil society are being actively involved in the implementation of the policies and projects analyzed during the first phase of the MEDGOVERNANCE project.

However, the implementation of actual horizontal decision-making processes is still limited. In some case, incomplete or immature decentralization processes hold back development – this is typical of European but even more of Eastern and Southern Mediterranean countries. In the different national contexts found in the cases studies, the regions’ roles depends on the maturity of the decentralization process. In Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries, decentralization and regionalization are still in their infancy. In other cases, as in Italy or Spain, where decentralization seems to be more mature, regional and local authorities nevertheless show only limited achievements in terms of participative programming and budgeting. The implementation of public policies through multilevel governance remains very superficial and central States are still the key players in territorial development.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENFORCING EUROMED REGIONS

The last section of the Report is devoted to the exploration of possible paths for a strategic regional initiative, paths based on the conclusions offered above. Here, different processes already underway in the higher reaches of decision making are creating a favorable background for a regional initiative.

In 2010, the European Commission will launch its consultation process on the 2014-2020 budgetary period. This consultation will involve a discussion on the Commission’s proposals on a wide range of policies, instruments and funding including the question of structural funds and territorial cooperation. Among the documents and guidelines supporting the consultation process, the European Commission has already published a strategic document called EU 2020.

The last decade has been characterized by massive disillusionment with intergovernmental decision-making processes and their ability to address transnational issues such as the future of the Mediterranean region or global warming. There are also the repeated failures of intergovernmental processes (UpM or negotiations on climate change) that saw key Mediterranean issues on top of the political agenda, while a political vacuum developed below, a vacuum that gave regions the opportunity to engage in policy fields that are traditionally dominated by the State and by international bodies. This inability of States to co-operate on common issues opens the way for autonomous initiatives on the part of local and regional authorities.

Another significant trend is the development of macro-regional processes and notably the elaboration and adoption of the Baltic Strategy in 2009. Such processes are clearly giving a new impetus to the debate on Mediterranean cooperation. The development of macro-regional strategies in different contexts (in the Baltic Sea or in the Danube region) provides a renewed framework for structuring European cooperation and structural funds in regions cutting across national boundaries.

The preparation of the next EU budget period constitutes an opportunity for Mediterranean regions to take the initiative on operational cooperation initiatives in the Mediterranean region, initiatives that would take regional cooperation to a new level: beyond present day

transnational and cross border matters. The priority is to engage Mediterranean regional authorities in large-scale initiatives. Here a meaningful common initiative might be the preparation of a Mediterranean macro-region strategy along the lines of the Baltic Strategy officially endorsed by the European Commission in September 2009.

A Mediterranean approach has to be designed, taking into account the lessons learned from the preparation of the Baltic Strategy and taking into account too the specificity of the Mediterranean context. In this framework, the following elements might be picked out as methodological principles for the preparation of a macro-regional strategy for the Mediterranean area:

- **Inclusion of Southern territories:** though still weak and under State control, local and regional authorities are gaining influence in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean and they have been formally recognized within Euromed policies since the creation of the **ARLEM**; in parallel, the Union for the Mediterranean increasingly promotes a territorial dimension in its projects.
- **A step-by-step approach:** a regional cooperation process will not realistically include, from the offset, all the regions in all 44 countries participating in the UfM. Rather they should begin with a **core group of pioneer regions**, a group that would be progressively enlarged;
- **A limited set of issues and policy fields:** in order to be efficient and visible the future cooperation framework should not aim at covering a wide range of policy fields. On the contrary, it should be clearly focused on a limited set of core issues. Here, **climate change** could give grounds for interesting cooperation projects;
- **The three NOs:** “*no additional institutions, no additional regulation, no additional funding*”. This principle has clearly favoured support to the Baltic Strategy on the part of European institutions and could, therefore, be usefully endorsed by the Mediterranean regions in the preparation of their cooperation framework;
- **A participatory and multilevel dimension:** the preparation and the management of any cooperation framework for the Mediterranean regions should be based on multilevel governance. The Baltic Strategy would be a good model for the preparation and implementation of a transnational participatory process involving many different stakeholders including local and regional authorities. These processes effectively identify the region’s priority areas and projects from each country. As for its management, the Mediterranean regions will have to innovate and create the conditions for shared horizontal governance involving regional authorities together with member States and European institutions.

Moving towards a macro region will mean “upgrading” the regions’ influence capacities and tools. The Committee of the Regions and the newly-created ARLEM will be important in communicating and interfacing with the European Commission. But they will not lead by themselves to better strategic coherence in the Mediterranean regions. New institutional and technical tools need to be developed for this, tools that can take into account those tools that are already present (such as the Intermed Commission of the CPMR) so regions ultimately have more influence with the Commission.