



Invest in Med: initiatives in favor of a sustainable construction sector in the Mediterranean

1. Overview of the challenge

Nowadays, the Euro-Mediterranean area counts almost 700 million inhabitants, more than half of them (430 millions) living around the Mediterranean shores. Although fertility is quickly decreasing (the total fertility rates – TFR of Tunisia and Algeria are below that of France), the Southern MED population growth rate remains high.

Meanwhile, the urbanization rate keeps growing: from the 1950's to the 2000's, population in Mediterranean countries increased over 200%, making this area the most urbanised in the world. Nowadays, over 2 Mediterranean people out of 3 live in cities, 24 of which have over 1 million inhabitants (with two metropolises, Cairo and Istanbul, which weigh together about 32 million inhabitants). In 2025, 378 million people are expected to live in urban areas of the Mediterranean, which represents a rise of 100 million up from today.

Mediterranean cities must adapt to face a growing demand and be able to welcome new populations. From North to South through East, important metropolitan challenges are to be met in order to control the urban development, improve the social and territorial coherence, promote sober ways of living and have a lower impact on the environment. In few years, the water stress will increase from 19 % today, to 35% in 2070 in this area.

The stake is important because the building sector is one of the main responsible for gas emission: construction, heat, air-conditioning, lights ... represent 40% of the total energy consumed in Europe. Almost all the habitable park on the 2 rims of the Mediterranean is made of old buildings which need an effort of modernisation to reach current norms.

The energy efficiency challenge is of special importance and can become an economical asset for local and regional economies. Housing weighs 40% of Europe's total energy consumption, and even in oil & gas-rich Southern MED countries, a growing domestic consumption of hydrocarbons for housing issues (heating and air-conditioning, etc.) starts posing a threat for hard currency-earning oil and gas exports. Renovation is also a strategic market, knowing the average replacement rate of buildings is of 1 to 2 % a year.

A great effort has to be made on the current mass-housing projects and not only on the few high environmental quality business buildings being built. Considering that most Mediterranean territories face similar constraints (sun, wind, water, way of living, etc), solutions can be shared. Intelligent conception of buildings, water and energy control systems, innovation on efficient materials at a reasonable price could easily lead to renovation and construction programmes at a lower price emerging from North-South partnerships including public authorities and private sector.

To invent tomorrow's "Mediterranean building", Euro-Mediterranean cooperation is vital and must be encouraged. That is precisely what Invest in Med does by supporting fields' initiatives in sustainable civil engineering works.

In this sector Invest in Med aims to:

- Set up a cooperation network for the sustainable development and management of industrial parks and tourism infrastructure in the Mediterranean;
- Encourage business and investment in the eco-construction sector between Europe and Southern MED countries, especially by developing business networks in the insulation sector, and by developing technical networks working on social housing projects.

2. Initiatives

Four out of the 49 Invest in Med initiatives focus on those issues: BATIMED, Building Insulation –Rationale use of energy in housing & construction, Euromed Green Building - a strategic partnership for a greener construction sector, SO'ECO Eco-construction in social housing.

- BATIMED – Construction partnerships between Poland and Maghreb aims to boost partnership between companies in Civil engineering works in Poland and Maghreb. The leader of this project is the Polish Chamber of Commerce working with the Chamber of Commerce of Casablanca (Morocco) and Algerian Chamber of Commerce. They intend to increase investments, business deals and cooperation between companies from both rims of the Mediterranean. Two operations took place in February 2010 in Warsaw, Poland, and 3 more are to come (workshops 11/2010 Casablanca, workshops + B2B 01/2011 Warsaw-Poznan).

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- Building Insulation –Rationale use of energy in housing & construction. This project has as leader a southern structure: CACI from Algeria and its partners (UTICA (Tunisia), CGEM (Morocco), GTZ (Germany), REME network (Maghreb)) want to share their best skills in insulation and waterproofness solutions between the Maghreb 3 countries and 3 European countries (Germany, Italy and France), creating a guide of best practises and organising business meetings. An operation has already taken place in Paris, and another one in Algiers at the beginning of May 2010. Deux opérations ont eu lieu en février à Varsovie, Pologne. 3 autres sont encore à venir (ateliers 11/2010 Casablanca, ateliers B2B 01/2011 Varsovie-Poznan).

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- Euromed Green Building - a strategic partnership for a greener construction sector led by the Association of Portuguese Industry (AIP) and 5 partners from both rims: the Chamber of Commerce and Industry TAFNA – Tlemcen (Algeria), Confederation of Egyptian European Business Associations – CEEBA (Egypt), Confederación Española de Organizaciones Empresariales – CEOE (Spain), Confédération Générale des Entreprises du Maroc – CGEM (Morocco), Hellenic Federation of Enterprises – SEV (Greece). It intended to increase the environmental performance of the construction sector through best practises dissemination workshops and business meetings. They took place in Lisbon from 13 to 15 May 2010 at the Tektonika fair.

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- SO'ECO Eco-construction in social housing is led by Interco Aquitaine (France) with 5 partners (Tunisian Union for Industry, Commerce and craft industry- UTICA, Wallonia Agency for Exportation Foreign Investments – AWEX (Belgium), Consorci de Promoció Comercial de Catalunya - COPCA (Spain), Syrian Investment Agency – SIA (Syria), Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Beirut and Mount Lebanon - CCIABML (Lebanon), they want to reinforce the environmental performance in the social housing sector and in particular concerning to the construction but also the renovation of those housing. This project has been launched on 10 March 2010 in Bordeaux. Technical assistances are planned in June and trainings in Autumn 2010 in Syria, Lebanon and Tunisia. B2B meetings are planned for March 2011 in Marseille (Batimed fair).

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