

« MEDINAS 2030 »

Rehabilitation of Historic City Centres

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A Knowledge management program of the
Marseille Center for Mediterranean Integration
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The « Medinas 2030 » Initiative



By 2030, nearly 80% of Mediterranean Partner Countries' populations will be concentrated on 10% of the land – predominantly the coastline. This increasing urbanisation creates many social and economic challenges which need to be addressed. Chief among these is the discovery that the historical city centres or 'medinas' have been undergoing a perpetual process of social and economic deterioration (notably in the Maghreb countries). The 'Medinas 2030' initiative unites international organisations, investors, town associations and experts to renew awareness on the importance of addressing the issue of the rehabilitation of medinas for the sustainable development of Mediterranean cities.

Promoting Awareness Among Policymakers and Urban Actors

After consultation with relevant international stakeholders, the European Investment Bank launched in 2008 the “Medinas 2030” initiative. This was consolidated during a conference held under the Architectural Biennale in Venice in October of the same year. Discussions during the conference, the proceedings of which have since been published in a book entitled “Medinas 2030: Scenarios and Strategies”¹, led to the definition of a series of key objectives.

The “Medinas 2030” initiative aims, therefore, to promote awareness among policy makers of the need to act with regard to the need to rehabilitate historical city areas in the Mediterranean region and to adopt a medium-to-long term perspective that will make the “heart of the city” an essential element

¹ “Medinas 2030: Scenarios and Strategies, M. Balbo (ed.), L’Harmattan, 2010

in the development of the agglomeration. New patterns of migration, compounded by the lack of investment to rehabilitate the buildings, has led to the impoverishment of the habitat.

It was with this objective in mind that a seminar was organised in Marseille on the 8th and 9th of October 2009, by the EIB. Nearly 200 people were in attendance of which around 40% were national public policymakers and mayors from the Southern and Eastern coasts of the Mediterranean. Also in attendance were academics, urban planners, housing professionals and representatives of international financing institutions. All of the Mediterranean partner countries were represented.

Additionally, a travelling Medinas exhibition was launched to publicise the challenges and experiences of successful rehabilitation projects in the Mediterranean. This exhibition was on display at the seminar in Marseille but has since travelled to different events in the region including Barcelona, Luxembourg and Damascus.

Integrative Strategies

A second objective of the program is to identify integrative strategies and mechanisms of urban rehabilitation and governance which address the issues of spatial, economic and social planning as well as public governance.

The marginalization of traditional economic activities by the expanding urban areas has impoverished the local populations, reduced the urban attractiveness of the historical centres and transformed them into tourist destinations. The lack of a framework specifically designed to address the needs of medinas in many countries further leaves medinas defenceless against urban degradation.

The adopted strategy should aim to promote a better quality of life for local inhabitants in both economic and social terms while also preserving their cultural traditions. This will include targeting access to adapted public services and job

creation which are of importance to the residents. Moreover, the strategy should attempt to reconcile the breach between the “modern” and “traditional” sectors to ensure that future urbanisation does not further seclude the medina.

A consensus around the need to define a coherent development strategy for medinas that is differentiated from a strategy to conserve historical monuments or to develop tourist activities emerged during the Marseille seminar in 2009. It was stressed



that the sustainable development of medinas requires an integrated approach simultaneously addressing the issues of housing, local economic development as well as heritage conservation.

The participants furthermore agreed that local populations should be at the core of the strategy and that public authorities should prioritise participative processes that incorporate the residents.

Adapted Financial Tools

Lastly, the “Medinas 2030” initiative aims to propose an adapted financial mechanism to deal with the abovementioned issues. This will involve the identification and adaptation of financing tools to support the completion of rehabilitation operations. The effective implementation of the programme to restore ancient medinas will require long-term commitments from public and private investors both locally, nationally and internationally.

The Marseille seminar further concluded that public financing will not be sufficient to meet the needs and will thus need to act as a lever to mobilise other types of funds. Financial partnerships involving the private sector (investors and civil society) would offer an ideal solution and therefore should be valued.



Principles of Action

The measures to regenerate historical urban centres are based on three pillars. Firstly, a pragmatic approach to the rehabilitation of medinas must be adopted. The future operations financed must be transparent and governance ensured so as to guarantee the comprehensive and integrated steering of such operations. Secondly, detailed knowledge of the socio-economic and financial components of the operations carried out in the Mediterranean region as well as their benchmarking are key factors for the success of the initiative. These shall determine the future involvement of private investors. Lastly, involving local inhabitants at a later stage will be crucial to the sustainability of the initiative.

Interest in Partner Countries

A questionnaire was distributed during the Marseille seminar to evaluate the level of interest raised by the “Medinas 2030”

programme. The results confirmed a strong interest in the initiative among potential stakeholders and more importantly clarified the expectations of long-term investors and development organisations particularly in terms of support for the implementation of public-private partnerships (PPPs) and the governance of integrated projects that are, by their very nature, complex.

Almost 96% of the participants consider that a Euro-Mediterranean action would be the best formula for giving new momentum to activities. The foundations for this initiative were set through this seminar and other meetings, and are stable enough to sustain future actions.

In addition, 91% of the participants agreed that local and national authorities would be ready to engage in the “Medinas 2030” initiative. It is further believed that residents, craftsmen, tradesmen and shopkeepers will accept the forthcoming framework which will bring suitable financing to the various actors in rehabilitation operations.

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Lastly, 90% of the participants believe that international financial institutions have a key role to play by assisting with the rehabilitation of medinas, particularly in terms of financial closing.

Concerns were nevertheless raised regarding the lack of technical experience in this field. Among other motives that were raised, the participants also pointed out the presence of too many stakeholders, which makes a consensus hard to reach, notwithstanding the absence of a clearly defined strategic vision. By identifying exemplary operations, the “Medinas 2030” initiative will contribute to the reduction of such barriers, in particular through the creation of a clear framework for action and the co-ordinated efforts of all parties.

Programme Deliverables

A Scientific Committee

Firstly, in light of the concerns expressed in the responses to the questionnaire, a Scientific Committee has been set up that will engage in raising awareness among the stakeholders, especially public policymakers in the partner countries. It should contribute to better publicizing the objectives of the “Medinas 2030” initiative, following the implementation of the initiative and detecting the technical and financing needs.

Pilot Project in Meknes

Additionally, a pilot project in Meknes is presently being implemented to identify ways to assist the housing sector.



A seminar will be organised at the beginning of 2011 where the first results of the pilot project will be presented.

A Documentary Study

In order to better inform the direction of the initiative, one of the first actions has been a documentary study to examine the current context in the Mediterranean partner countries and to identify several medinas that are most eligible for investments.

Pre-Operational Study

The main action of the “Medinas 2030” Initiative involves the publication of a pre-operational study identifying the value added of the programme. This study will also help identify specific projects to be financed, the financial tools and a road map for the program. The final results of this study will be presented at a conference that should take place towards the end of 2012.

Consulting Financial Institutions

Finally, a process will be instigated to consult international financial institutions and financial partners. This will aim to test financing mechanisms for supporting medina rehabilitation projects which will later serve as an operating framework for long-term lenders and investors

The Marseille Centre For Mediterranean Integration



CMI The Marseille Center for Mediterranean Integration was launched in October 2009 with the mandate of creating a platform for integration in the Mediterranean region through high-level policy dialogue, dissemination and knowledge management in key development areas which are of primary importance for the Mediterranean region: urban and spatial development; skills, employment and labor mobility; environment and water; transport and logistics; knowledge economy, innovation and technology. Funding members are the Governments of Egypt, France, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia as well as the World Bank and the European Investment Bank. Other members are likely to join the Center in the near future.



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