



Conference
Urban
development strategies
in the Mediterranean
Barcelona, March 14 and 15
2011

Barcelona Conference Conclusions

The Barcelona Conference on the Urban Development Strategies took place on March 14th and 15th, 2011. The main objective of the event was to lead the different Mediterranean stakeholders (local authorities, governments, donors, cities network etc.) towards a common approach in their concepts of urban development and towards methodologies that can be adapted to a range of contexts relative to the Mediterranean region. Cities face tremendous challenges; **choices made in urban development will have a huge impact** on national development, job creation and the management of environmental transformations. The conference brought together some 180 participants from all around the Mediterranean, including international, private sector, economic leaders, Mayors from Agadir in Morocco to Tripoli in Lebanon.

Thanks to the City of Barcelona, the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, Cities Alliance, the World Bank, the French Caisse des Depots, French Development Agency, GIZ and European Investment Bank for the hosting and organization of the event.

A special thanks to Joan Parpal, from MedCities, William Cobbett, from Cities Alliance, Maryse Gautier and Candice le Tourneur from the Center for Mediterranean Integration, for their mobilization.

The Mayor of Barcelona in opening the conference stated that “We cannot remain silent; we cannot settle for less than action”. The different sessions took stock and explored the challenges ahead and the strategic and operational ways to move forward. Articulated around 8 sessions, the main messages advocated a bottom-up approach, involving a cross sectoral strategy which should focus on the long term, sharing experiences, peer-to-peer learning and practices, as ultimately a tool **to facilitate access to citizenship and to achieve an innovative and integrative approach which promotes:**

- **Comprehensiveness:** A solid understanding of the city as a whole (economics, demographic trends, governance) is necessary, notably through capacities reinforcement dedicated to local authorities. Both national and local governments have to work hand in hand to link city strategies and national urban policies.
- **Sustainability:** A focus on the investment outcomes from the initial stages of the strategic design in order to explore innovative mechanisms to improve financial stability of urban projects while highlighting the role of private sector at the upstream and downstream steps.

- **Cross-sectoral perspective:** Cities adaption to socioeconomic and environmental challenges should include a roadmap to define priorities and to include young people as well as the poorest communities, particularly vulnerable to climate change.
- **Long-term perspective:** Urban development strategies should not be linked to the political cycle but rather be planned on a long-term basis to strengthen local ownership and ensure a sustainable vision.

At the Barcelona meeting, official representatives, governments, development agencies, city networks and financial institutions reflected on common and concrete solutions to city strategic planning. It was emphasized that **urban societies were incubators of economic and social development** of the countries of the Mediterranean Region and are instrumental in the transformation processes. Cities are at the heart of the democratic process, directly responding to the needs of their communities. Building on analytical evidence, the sessions led to the following action steps which will be facilitated by the CMI, MedCities and its partners following the Conference:

- The CMI as a knowledge platform that will serve local authorities on ongoing projects, financing solutions, identified best practices;
- Close collaboration with the network of MedCities in terms of learning through peer-to-peer sessions dedicated to city development strategy stakeholders;
- Design an adapted methodology to the Mediterranean context, drawing on the report on the Urban development Strategies in the Mediterranean region, in order to engineer a toolbox which would assist project implementation;
- Strengthen the synergies among the different actors and local stakeholders, most notably local authorities, in part through a training program organized with the partners.

The ongoing unprecedented socioeconomic and political transformations in the Mediterranean countries provide a unique historical opportunity. The unprecedented transformations raise the expectations of the Mediterranean people and extend the opportunities for the CMI to engage livable cities, improving access to urban services and to encourage better governance.