

Report Euromed Cities Network - Webinar 12.07.2021

For a green and resilient recovery of Mediterranean cities

Introductory remarks by Agnès RAMPAL.

■ Speech by Fathallah SIJILMASSI, Founding President of P2A, Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean until 2018, former Moroccan Ambassador to the EU and France.

It is never too late to be Euro-Mediterranean activists.

Sharing the results of the Positive Agenda study, carried out in collaboration with the European Climate Foundation, on the issue of post-covid resilience. Some issues were already identified and were the subject of preventive or corrective measures before the pandemic in the Mediterranean area, such as the speed of growth of climate change, which was already higher than in the rest of the world. The relatively high rate of urbanisation, population growth and economic growth lead to high energy and water consumption. In addition, the health impact of the pandemic is multiplied tenfold by its economic impact. Tourism is a structural part of the Mediterranean economy. Its net cessation due to the halt in international mobility as well as the disruption of trade, which is a vector of growth and employment, has had a strong impact on unemployment. This is all the more true since youth unemployment in the MENA region is the highest in the world.

The crisis is a rupture, from which we are learning new lessons. **Only a holistic vision will provide a solution to the recovery strategies that must be combined.**

This crisis is becoming a triple accelerator: of the green, digital and inclusive transition.

Renewed resilience and competitiveness are becoming sources of strong, sustainable green growth that creates more jobs and generates balanced development. The European Union, through its new trade and neighbourhood policy but also thanks to the Green Deal, is setting an unprecedented dynamic in favour of a different development model. The study also illustrates that the recovery is an opportunity to be seized for the strengthening of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and more broadly Euro-African. **But this economic recovery depends above all on South-South cooperation before North-South cooperation develops.**

In concrete terms, the EU-Africa Summit and the COP27 in Egypt are working towards a growing recognition of Africa as a major future player.

Even before the pandemic, Morocco stood out by gradually adopting an ambitious new development model. It is trying to establish itself as a link between Europe, the Euro-Mediterranean and Africa. The COP22 in Marrakech was an opportunity to illustrate the path of green, digital and inclusive transitions in a developing country, as illustrated by the commitments made on renewable energy. Furthermore, the inclusiveness of the Moroccan growth model was demonstrated by the generalisation of social protection to the entire population by 2025.

The future of the Mediterranean area is based on the construction of major regional partnerships, in order to strengthen cooperation at all levels (especially South/South) as well as on advanced regionalisation reinforcing proximity and connection to the field (example of Morocco). **The territories are the expression and the concretisation of objectives connecting national, international and local strategies.** They highlight urban dysfunctions. The vectors of the urban question are represented by the territories!

Speech by Eddine CHARAF (Cobaty International): Covid highlighted the lack of space: of certain housing units of course, but above all of living spaces in the city. A lot of work needs to be done in terms of urbanisation.

Sébastien VIANO (Moderator, Director of Europe, Euro-Mediterranean and External Funding at the Nice Côte d'Azur Metropolis / Secretary General of the Euromed Cities Network): drew attention to [the UfM's new urban platform](#) and its action plan. Sébastien VIANO insists on the issue of housing in the Mediterranean and the inequality between Mediterranean cities, on the telework environment, how will cities live after the Covid and how to develop urban centres?

- Blanca MORENO-DODSON, Director of the CMI, PhD in Economics and Finances.

Cities have a key role to play in post-covid recovery. In this sense, Nice is an example of good governance, from which other territories could be inspired in a mutual exchange of good practices.

The challenges that existed before the pandemic, such as the very high rate of urbanisation, the strong pressure on public services, housing and energy, highlight the strong disparities in unemployment, poverty and social balance between rural and urban areas.

The Mediterranean is an area that is particularly sensitive to climate change and is increasingly vulnerable. Agricultural and tourism policies do not take into account water stress, even though it is a major and serious reality.

Local governments often face a lack of resources, amplified by Covid, which has forced changes in the allocation of expenditure to deal with the health emergency.

Cooperation between central governments and communities is not yet complete, although the crisis has demonstrated the capacity of communities to respond to emergencies.

The MEdCCA project, an example of concerted action by southern Mediterranean cities on climate action.

From the perspective of resilience, many **levers must be mobilised such as cooperation between cities and the State, digitalisation, a public-private partnership at local level with the participation of civil society and businesses, the use of fiscal measures and investments stimulating the green transition.**

The need for plans to prevent serious risks (pandemics, fire, floods, etc.) has also increased. So has the need for inclusiveness to reduce the gaps between cities and rural areas.

In this sense, the climate action plans developed by cities are exemplary, as they are adapted to the situation of each city, whether it is the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, the Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP) or the ClimaMed project. In Oujda, Morocco, the PAED complements the "Jiha Tinou" initiative of the Moroccan Agency for Energy Efficiency. As for the role of cities, it is a question of accompanying the transition and the fight against climate change, via a system of risk prevention (pandemics, natural risks) and protection of vulnerable populations (forced migration and conflict, for example). In addition, cooperation through the sharing of solutions is an essential dimension.

Potential of a Mediterranean market for renewable energy: the South can supply the North Mediterranean

F. SIJILMASSI: strengthening/focusing actions on youth employment

B. MORENO DODSON: importance to be given to the professional training of young people. **NGOs or international institutions can act as a link between government authorities and local authorities to help allocate investment (in developing countries)**

A. JAFFRE: notes the interest of networks because the identification of projects and programmes is not very coordinated. An entity to disseminate information and existing support is needed. The AIMF (international association of French mayors) proposes a system that labels projects but also triggers the related funding very quickly.

Do not forget the private sector, which today recognises a strong stake in sustainable visibility. Investments for the private sector should be targeted. Perhaps take advantage of the French presidency of the EU to channel this funding?

- Nebojsa Sevaljevic, Deputy Mayor of Kotor in Montenegro

Jelena STJEPČEVIĆ Head of the International Cooperation Department: Kotor was the 3rd most visited tourist destination in the Adriatic and the Mediterranean before the health crisis. Its rapid growth was causing concerns about mass tourism and its climate impacts.

In the midst of the pandemic, residents rediscovered the benefits of a quiet, low-key environment. **The challenge now is to regain economic activity through sustainable and more responsible tourism, by establishing a sustainable development strategy.** Kotor has invaluable but exhaustible resources, so a long-term vision is needed to push back the current limits. Solutions include the use of new technologies to reduce CO2 emissions, the democratisation of greener fuel and wastewater treatment systems for cruise ships. In addition, the city of Kotor feels the need to exchange with other cities involved in maritime development and infrastructure in the tourism sector in order to learn from each other's best practices. The main aim is to improve the management and preservation of the blue economy and to restore the confidence of tourists.

- Georges YOUSSEF, Mayor of Menjez in Lebanon

The municipality of Menjez, which has been in existence since 2012, comprises 4 distinct areas that are representative of a rich territory: an urban, wooded and agricultural area as well as the water basin area.

This territory, home to vulnerable populations, has been weakened many times by the economic crisis, the Syrian crisis, desertification and deforestation among others. The socio-economic development approach of Menjez is thus based on the objectives of sustainable development and the protection of natural and cultural heritage. Participation in national and international partnerships is essential, as is the effort to respond to almost all calls for projects intended for municipalities. In particular, a large-scale reforestation project was carried out in the context of forest preservation projects. The first resilience action was the participation in the Covenant of Mayors for Sustainable Energy and Climate in 2016, as the first Lebanese city. Now Menjez has about 30 short, medium and long term actions, some of which are funded by the EU.

At present, Menjez is open to new cooperation in various fields (cf presentation).

[For more information, we invite you to watch the replay, available here.](#)

The presentations of the speakers, complementary to this short report, [are available here.](#)