



STUDY ON THE DECENTRALISED COOPERATION BETWEEN THE REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF THE ARAB MAGHREB

Dialogue and capacity building of
local and regional authorities
in EU partner countries
in the fields of development
and local governance

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**Study on the decentralised cooperation
between the regional authorities of the Arab Maghreb**

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INTRODUCTION

Established on the basis of an international project, which took shape in Europe due to the repercussions of the twinning arrangements after the Second World War, the decentralised cooperation includes multiple definitions and realities that vary according to the country where it is executed. It usually appoints a long term partnership established between the regional authorities of different countries. Based on the framework provided by the law, these partnerships can be made in different forms: a twinning arrangement, an institutional support, a development aid, cross-border cooperation among others. In France, for example, a decentralised cooperation implies the signing of an agreement that specifies the cooperative objectives and projects that have been implemented. For the European Union, any development programme conducted with a local partnership in the southern parts of the country can be classified as a decentralised cooperation. The direct exchange between the regional authorities is not implied as a formal requirement. In Morocco, the internal decentralised cooperation is classified between the Moroccan and international communities¹.

Generally speaking, the history of the decentralised cooperation is closely linked to that of decentralisation. This form of partnership develops reasonably as the regional authorities liberate themselves from the supervision of the central State and possess skills suitable for the international projects. It concerns the region that is facing the heat of the issue.

The Arab Maghreb is a vast geographical area that includes the West and East of Maghreb, Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. It is presented on an institutional level by the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), organisation that was founded in 1989, stalled since then by political disagreements among its members, especially on issues concerning Western Sahara. Therefore, the Arab Maghreb forms one of the regions that is least connected with the rest of the world. Besides this, it comprises a lot of centralised States. The obstacles faced during the exchanges are many and all the more for the regional authorities, for whom the political, legal, financial and human resources are limited. Due to this situation, the partnerships between the regional cities are neither too developed nor too impetuous. To begin with, the foundation of a decentralised regional cooperation concerns Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. Owing to their geographical situation, the level of development and political history, Mauritania and Libya seem different in this regional space.

The exchanges however continue. These countries have witnessed several historical events. In the 1980s, in the impulse of launching the AMU, several twinning agreements were signed between the regional municipalities. Today, the partnerships are witnessing some resurgence with the Arab Spring and the reforms for decentralisation and governance in which the local partnership takes a prominent place. The numerous exchanges at the local level is a major challenge to set off a mechanism in regional integration. Different means to bring people together, the twinning agreements and the decentralised cooperation can in fact be a driving force to build the regional identity promoted in the political rhetoric of the Maghreb States.

While the experiences pertaining to decentralised cooperation within the Arab Maghreb are limited and hardly documented, the first part of this report should specify the situation in which the regional authorities are progressing and the obstacles faced by them. The first report on the existing partnerships is then proposed with some drafts of analysis to understand the situation of the decentralised cooperation in this region. Finally, the role of sponsors who support the regional authorities is studied and the recommendations are offered to all the participating parties in order to encourage the development of cooperation at the local level.

¹ The regional authorities in numbers, 2011 Edition, Home Office, Directorate General of Municipal Corporation Morocco.



SUMMARY

The regional situation weighs heavily on the existence of the decentralised cooperation in Arab Maghreb. There are two factors that need to be scrutinised in this respect. On the one hand, the regional zone is not incorporated politically or economically. Even the border between Morocco and Algeria is closed. On the other hand, the five countries in the zone have made different political decisions since their independence, which has caused violent upheavals and has also resulted in the breach of diplomatic relations. A permanent feature should be outlined. These countries were built on the lines of a strong and centralised State that has often opposed the security challenges in the vague desire of decentralisation. Morocco, however, is different from the rest because of significant reforms were undertaken recently. The legal frameworks anticipate the practice of the decentralised cooperation in most cases although they contain considerable limitations. The supervisory authority has a prominent role.

In practice, the regions in Arab Maghreb mostly depend on Europe, especially France, for their international exposure. Meanwhile, ground breaking experiences have taken shape, such as the trilateral partnerships or the transnational networks, a few examples of which are reported in this document. The list of cooperative agreements in the region reports a few connections established between the Maghreb regions for the most part of the 1980s. It is important to note that these partnerships are not very active. The regional diversity and the obstacles faced during the national negotiations, the state supervision that weighs in the regions and the shortcomings of the regional representative associations in the region seem to explain the external difficulties faced by the regions in their international project. The issues pertaining to the decentralised cooperation should also be taken into consideration, such as the lack of financial resources for the regions and inadequate training provided to their agents and elected representatives and poor objectives for the projects undertaken due to lack of communication.

The sponsors, primarily for the European Union, are very active in the region. It is agreed that the European Union does not give importance to issues pertaining to Arab Maghreb Union in its programs; it does not favour intra-regional exchanges. Mauritania is associated with the African-Caribbean-Pacific countries, while Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia are a part of the neighbouring region and Libya, currently, does not have any bilateral contractual relations with the European Union. There are several European, geographical or thematic programs even at the local level, which focus on the governance. However, the decentralised cooperation in its current form is not considered as a priority to the sponsors.

In conclusion, two types of recommendations are proposed: on the framework level and on the practical level of the decentralised cooperation. Firstly on the framework level, it could be a matter of strengthening the decentralised areas and dialogue above all else, between the central government and municipal corporations, to contribute to the strategic orientations that need to be defined for the international project of the local actors and strengthen the supporting role of the regional associations. Next on the practical level, it is recommended for the European Union to reassert the importance of the decentralised cooperation, especially in the South-South axis, in its programs as the new regional program for SUDEP or the cross-border cooperative programme. For the main incentives, such as the pre-condition for European support or even creation of a regional price for the decentralised cooperation could also be studied. In the end, the training of the parties concerned, sign an agreement for the exchange, and progress in the vision of the partnerships seem necessary in order to evolve in this type of local cooperation.

I. LEGAL ENVIRONMENT AND SITUATION

1. The regional situation

Study of the decentralised cooperation and its present limitations within Greater Maghreb gives attention to the regional situation. Two major factors that have given form to the existence of this regional area: on the one hand, its poor political and economical integration and on the other hand, the national policies, especially those concerning the partial reforms for decentralisation. In short, the regional authorities of the Greater Maghreb are the players without any power or with burgeoning power depending on the country, which are developing in a poorly integrated zone and provides very little encouragement to the mutual exchanges.

The decentralisation in the Maghreb

The territorial organisation of the countries in the Arab Maghreb is inherited from their colonial past. During independence, the unification and the centralisation served as the foundation for these new born Countries. This external influence, especially the structural adjustment policies of the IMF and the World Bank, led to the first reforms of decentralisation in the 1980s. Nevertheless, there exists an underlying difference between the legal framework displayed in these reforms and the method adopted by the central government. In the name of the stability and security, the political decisions in the region primarily focus on the construction of a strong, centralised and even a blocked State. The decentralisation, in certain situations, can be perceived as a sensitive subject and a risk of breach to the integrity of the Nation State. With the exception of Morocco, which is more actively involved in the decentralisation and the regionalisation, the processes initiated by other States in the zone, for the time being, fall more under general decentralisation than the decentralisation of power.

The integration of the AMU zone (Arab Maghreb Union)

In 1989, the Treaty of Marrakech established the AMU, which united Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. The preamble of the Treaty points out that “development of the Arab Maghreb Union requires tangible achievements and the establishment of common rules strengthening the effective solidarity between its components ensuring their economical and social development”².

Despite the multiple resemblances that define the Maghreb region (history, language, culture, religion, remains) and the economical dependence (oil, gas, phosphate, agriculture, industry, tourism), the area is very poorly integrated and the economical exchanges in the intra-Maghreb regions are hardly developed. The different national procedures, the security challenges and the territorial conflicts concerning the Western Sahara in particular are the main causes of this situation and represent AMU as a large symbolic institution.

However, in these discussions, the Greater Maghreb union seems to be a recurring political objective. In the Royal discussions on the constitutional reform of 2011, the sovereign of Morocco points out, for example, that the Constitution declares the position of the country as an “integral part of the Greater Maghreb as well as its commitment in favour of the development, which arises from the Maghreb Union”³.

Besides the AMU, an informal dialogue, on “Dialogue 5+5” exists between the five countries of the AMU for the Southern shore of the Mediterranean and Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Malta for the Northern shore of the Mediterranean. This regular dialogue allows unifying the positions of these upstream countries of the Union for the Mediterranean (UPM). The dialogue sometimes is limited to the intergovernmental level.

Out of these two structural trends, it may be noted that despite the signing of several twinning agreements, the regional situation, until now, was not favourable to such relations between regional authorities. On the one hand, the strong centralisation of the States, the poor legal framework for the decentralised cooperation, the conflicts, the border closures, the level of development and the different national procedures included since the Arab Spring represent the obstacles.

² <http://www.maghrebarabe.org/fr/marrakech.cfm>

³ Royal discussion on the constitutional reform, 17 June 2011, available on the website of the Moroccan ministry of the interior: <http://www.maroc.ma/fr/discours-royaux/annonce-des-reformes-constitutionnelles-texte-integral-du-discours-adresse-par-sm-le>



On the other hand, the States with the official diplomatic support in favour of the brother countries through the communities, the recent decentralisation reforms as well as the historical, cultural and religious similarities represent very good opportunities for the decentralised cooperation in the region.

2. The diversity in the national legal frameworks of the decentralised cooperation

The international cooperative movement of the communities started about forty years ago and in the absence of legal framework. It was based on the twinning agreements, which started, in the case of Morocco in 1963, with the twinning agreement between Fez and Florence in Italy. It faced opposition with regard to the supervisory powers, as is the case in several countries, including the European countries, in the beginning of the municipal movement.

Gradually, at the mercy of the institutional reforms, a legal framework for the international project for the regional authorities will soon be a possibility. These reforms, when they exist, shall be new. They are not completely adapted by the regional authorities yet. Sometimes, even these reforms are incomplete. For example, in Morocco, the regional law has not specifically sanctioned the right to the international cooperation for the benefit of the regions. But as regional authorities, nothing stops these regions from extending friendly relations and partnerships with other regional authorities. The Moroccan regions of Rabat-Salé-Zemmour-Zaer, Marrakech-Tensift-Al Haouz, the Eastern regions or Souss-Massa-Draa are very active in this field.

In **Mauritania**, the ruling no. 87-289 of 1987, updated in 2006, formed the decentralisation framework, which it puts together by defining the jurisdiction of the municipalities and their organisational agreements. It does not contain any provision specific to the international project for the municipalities. Although not yet approved by the Council of ministers, the new code of the regional authorities, drafted in 2010, provides considerable reforms. The Chapter VII, dedicated to the cooperation between the regional authorities, states that the communities can undertake the decentralised international cooperative projects under the supervision of the State (Article 26).

In **Morocco**, the objective of the association (Attacharouk) promoted during the national conference of the municipal corporations in 1986 enables the development of the initial cooperation. With the constitutional revision of 1996, securing the democracy and the law of 1997 creating the region, the regional authorities “acquire the status of essential partner of the State”⁴. The revision of the legal texts presiding over the regional authorities, the Constitution of 2011 and the advanced regionalisation project in progress are the latest developments. For the first time, the decentralisation laws include the provisions favouring the cooperation between the Moroccan communities and the foreign communities.

- The Article 42 of the Community Charter (2002, modified in 2009) states: “The Municipal council undertakes all cooperation, association or partnership measures likely to promote the economic, social and cultural development of the municipality with the help of administration, other legal persons governed by the public law, the private social and economic players and with other foreign organisation or community”.
- The Article 36 of the law 79-00 de 2002 states: “The prefectural or provincial council (...) concludes any agreement or convention of cooperation or partnership, for the promotion of the economic and social development and adopts measures to carry out the projects that the prefecture or the province shall execute in collaboration or in partnership with the public administration, the municipal corporations, the public or private organisations and the social players (...) examines and approves the conventions of the twinning agreement or decentralised cooperation; decides on adherence to and the participation in the association activities of the local authorities and any form of exchanges with the foreign local authorities after the consent from the supervisory authority and in accordance with the international commitments of the Kingdom. However, no convention can be passed between a prefecture, province or a group of municipal corporations with a foreign State”.

⁴ Royal Letter including the Orientations of S.M. The King Mohammed VI for the social and economic development plan (2000-2004), September 1999.

→ The Article 5 of the law 47-96 relating to the regional organisation states: “Within the framework of their jurisdictions, the regions can establish cooperation between them or with other municipal corporations, in compliance with the provisions under the Chapter VI of this law. The inter-regional cooperation or with other municipal corporations may not result in the formation of a supervision of one community over another. The Chapter VI (Article 61) states: “The regions can be authorised to establish the cooperative relations between them in order to carry out a common project, service of inter-regional interest or the management of the funds specific to every region and intended for financing the common works and making payment for certain common operating costs. The inter-regional cooperation is handled by a cooperative inter-regional committee”.

In a nutshell, the Moroccan regional authorities can conclude the agreements and the conventions of twinning agreements, decentralised cooperation, become a member of the associations and local authority networks, undertake all forms of exchanges with the regional authorities abroad and involve in the local diplomacy. The communities who wish to be a part of a twinning agreement should obtain the permission from their supervisory ministry and the royal approval. The twinning agreement procedure should be mentioned in the fields of partnership and the exchange formats.

Saint-Gilles, Belgium - Berkane Morocco: a cooperation highlighted by the Moroccan National Initiative for Human Development

A city to city approach

The decision of the elected representatives from Saint-Gilles to build bridges between the Moroccan communities originating from Berkane and largely located in Brussels region and their country of origin represents the triggering event of the cooperation. For the elected representatives of Berkane, it is about a strategic choice in favour of cultural and economic merger between the North and the South Their cooperative strategy is based on strengthening the local administrative capabilities in order to improve the public service rendered to the citizens. More specifically, the partnership is incorporated with the Moroccan national policies concerning the development of social welfare in the communities.

Initial challenge

The request of Berkane comes in the wake of the Moroccan National Initiative for Human Development (NIHD) started by the King Mohammed VI in 2005. This project is based on the conviction that only the local development included with the involvement of the communities can permanently reduce the poverty. This is in response to this new role assumed by the Moroccan communities as Berkane is in charge of developing new understandings, new procedures and new provision as regards social welfare with its Belgium partner.

Approach and objectives

This partnership is a part of the Federal programme of municipal international cooperation, implemented by the Union of cities and Brussels municipalities (AVCB) and Wallonia (UVCW). This programme, the first multiannual phase of which was completed in 2013, aims at strengthening the capacities of the associated Moroccan municipalities as regards social work (strengthening/establishment of a service, development of social provisions, etc.) Through this sectoral concentration and a common intervention framework with 7 Morocco-Brussels partnerships, the MIC invites the local authorities of the two countries to work together with the same objectives, even if priorities as regards the social work differ from one partnership to another depending on the Moroccan specific local situations.



Strategies

The strategies consist of strengthening the Berkane municipal administration capabilities, on the one hand, the exchange of skills between the local government officers and the elected representatives and on the other hand, the investments in different social infrastructures like the multipurpose room and a municipal library. The experience at Saint-Gilles as regards the social cohesion is used as the anchor point in the strategies.

Partners:

Saint-Gilles (Belgium) – Berkane (Morocco), with funding of €200.000 from the Belgium government over 5 years between 2009 and 2013.

Results

The first accurate result was the introduction of a social welfare service. This involves keeping the local government officers ready, defining their missions and providing a committee specific to their needs. This change took place during the meetings between the Belgium and Moroccan authorised representatives who are active in the Commission responsible for the Human development and the social, cultural and challenging matters. It is interesting to note that the Berkane municipality has given a further thought, which also includes the establishment of a Department for Social and Cultural affairs (DSCA) that includes 5 specific departments: social welfare, development of the partnerships, support for the associations, information and communication. The municipality has provided five municipal employees for this new department and has modified its organisation chart, which is validated by the local authority. These municipal officers at present have the skills required for managing their department (planning, development, follow-up and evaluation of projects) and management tools concerning the social welfare (procedure guide, social diagnosis, standard table for the excise duty on resources, multiannual and annual plan, profiles of project, activity reports). These new skills have given way to the fund raising from other sponsors for the association projects of development, which enhance the image of the municipality.

Advantages and reproducibility:

Today, this new social welfare development is adopted as a standard model by other Moroccan municipalities. Several among them have already carried out the expert assessment projects.

Challenges faced:

The MIC programme is repeatedly confronted with two major difficulties, namely, the retirement of the trained local government officers (transfer to another department, voluntary retirement or layoff) and the political constraints on either sides.

Perspectives:

The two municipalities wish to propose a new plan of action within the frame of the MIC program phase 2014-2016, especially with a common objective – the development of the social dialogue at Berkane.

Source:

Association of the City and the Municipalities of the Brussels Capital Region

In **Algeria**, a strongly centralised country, the study on the legitimisation of the Nation- state seems to be a permanent priority of the central government. In the wake of the 1989 Constitution, which sanctioned political pluralism and the objective of the separation of the powers, the municipal code was redefined by the law 90-08 in 1990, which specifies that the municipality is provided with the legal standing and is given the financial autonomy. In 2011, the law no. 11-10 redefined the municipal code, the Article 106 of which states that, “The twinning agreement of a municipality with a municipality of any other regional authority abroad is subject to a prior agreement from the ministry of the interior, after seeking permission from the ministry of the foreign affairs.”

In **Tunisia**, the decentralised cooperation is governed by the municipal framework law no. 75-33 dated 14 May 1975 (modified in 1995 and 2006). The Article 25 of this law authorises the municipality to carry out all international cooperation on condition that it is approved by the regional supervisory authority represented by the governor (prefect). The ministerial circular no. 62 dated 2 September 1986 and no. 60 dated 28 September 1992 on the twinning agreement of the cities describes the procedures of twinning agreement, cooperation and partnership for the municipalities. As far as the regional councils are concerned, the framework law no. 89-4 dated 4 February 1989 authorises them to establish the international cooperative relations on condition that the approval is received from the Ministry of the Interior (Article 5). The circular no. 4 dated 24 January 1990 provides the terms and conditions of their international cooperation. As for the circular no. 56 dated 19 November 1984, it defines the membership procedures of the municipal corporations in the regional and international associations and organisations in relation to their respective objectives. The Ministry of the Interior oversees the supervision on the regional councils and the municipalities, ensures the control, the follow-up and the support to the decentralised cooperation of the Tunisian municipal corporation with their counterparts abroad and approves of the administrative approaches of this cooperation in compliance with the laws and the regulation in force.

The Constitution adopted in January 2014 represents a significant progress in this field since it sanctions the decentralised cooperation for the first time. The Article 140 states: “The municipal corporations can cooperate and create the partnerships among them with the purpose of carrying out the programs or completing the projects of common interest. The municipal corporations can also build the external relations of partnership and decentralised cooperation. The law defines the rules of cooperation and partnership”.

Libya figures separately in this case. The Libyan municipal corporations were disconnected from the world during the forty-three years of the Gaddafi regime. After eight months of an armed revolt that got rid of colonel Gaddafi’s power of tyranny, the first free legislative elections were held in July 2012. They appointed 200 members of the National general Congress, called to take over the National Transition Council (NTC) and prepared the election of a Constituent assembly. The 68 local Councils were either placed under the NTC (This was the case in Tripoli and Sabha) or were elected in 2012 (In Misrata, Benghazi and Zawia). But the administrations remain under the supervision of the government. Every city is invited to organise the municipal elections at its pace. The elections have taken place in successive stages since 2013. First in many cities in the South (Ghat, Morzug and Ojala), the elections later took place in the West and the South-East, in the spring of 2014. In the cities now run by the elected mayors, they have specifically asked for the external experience and exchanges. The Libyan cities have some autonomy despite the chaos in the country. They are economically very active and have begun to structure themselves within the associations of local elected representatives. It is important to specify the legal framework that was basic and unstable while mentioning the political transition that Libya is going through. The mandate of the National General Council was extended up to December 2014, with a condition that it will work on improving the Constitution, which, it can be pointed out that, shall not be bound by the legal framework prepared during the transition period (especially the law no. 59 of 2012 on the local administration) The regional divide is still uncertain as well





II. THE FIRST ASSESSMENT OF EXCHANGES

1. Main structure and developments

During their emergence and their international exposure, the regional authorities of the Greater Maghreb mainly opted for Europe, France in particular⁵. This country has most of the agreements concerning the twinning agreements or the conventions of decentralised cooperation signed with the communities from the Greater Maghreb, with the exception of Libya. The classic plan of the North-South cooperation was replicated in each of these countries at the cost of horizontal exchanges between the brother countries, nonetheless promoted in the political rhetoric since the establishment of the AMU.

Across all regional authorities, France, Italy, Spain and Germany are the main partner countries of the Maghreb communities, especially the municipalities and some regions (essentially in Morocco). A large part of these cooperative programmes depends on the funding from the national development agencies (AFD, GIZ etc.), European Commission and/or takes advantage of the support from regional authority networks (AIMF, CGLU, VNG etc.).

With the growing awareness on the importance of the South-South exchanges and the potential of the regional integration in Maghreb, the developments are perceptible in the classic partnerships between the regional authorities since 2000. Related to the pressing need for effectiveness in the public policies, the growing commitment of the European communities for the results, evaluation and capitalisation of their international partnerships plays a positive role in these developments. As shown in the case studies in this report, we can talk about the North-South cooperation that has become trilateral North-South-South or bilateral cooperation, the programme for which was replicated by the communities in the North to another community in the South, or yet, the platform for exchange of skills between several communities in the North and the South.

Paris-Algeria, a cooperation between two Mediterranean capitals

Capitals that have strong cultural and political connections, Paris and Algeria are bound by a friendship and a cooperative agreement since 2003 following the request from Algeria. The city to city approach is the foundation of this institutional partnership, which relies on the municipal decisions taken by the Mayor of Paris and the Wali of Algeria. It is manifested in the form of exchanges between the officers of the municipal departments from these two cities and by sharing the technical know-how in various fields of the urban management.

Initial challenge

In terms of a strong urban growth, the organisation of local services is a part of the main challenges faced by Wilaya in Algeria in matters concerning the management of wastes and the layout of the urban spaces. Trapped in escheat since twenty years, the Test Garden of Hamma created in 1832, for example, represented an opportunity to exchange know-how with the city of Paris.

Approach and objectives

The approach depends on the long-lasting urban development in Algeria. It took shape in the form of two technical assistance projects: the support for the waste management and the restoration of the Test Garden. In the first case, on the lines of two approaches, the objective was to improve the management and eliminate the household waste in Algeria. The first approach, managed by the City of Paris, aims at training the officers and creating awareness among the citizens.

⁵ The detail about the cooperation can be looked up in the French reference book on the decentralised cooperation, which has a record of all the international projects undertaken by the French regional authorities: <https://pastel.diplomatie.gouv.fr/cncdext/dyn/public/atlas/accesMonde.html>

The second approach, led by the Department council of the Bouches-du-Rhône, aims at strengthening the skills of the environment management of Wilaya for the project ownership, evaluation and the follow-up of the master plan for the management of the household wastes. In the second case, the purpose is to renew and rebuild the botanical garden with a hope to preserve the Algerian biodiversity. It is mainly to support Wilaya in the preservation of its urban and natural heritage and to train the scientific and technical officers.

Projects

From 2005 to 2011, the city of Paris supported the structuring of the NET COM public institution and the introduction of the Algerian school of cleaning based on the lines of the School of cleaning in Paris. 14 instructors from this school and about ten officers from NET COM were trained.

For the restoration of the Test Garden of Hamma, the City of Paris has provided a continuous technical support since 2005. The project has achieved two significant steps:

- Between 2005 and 2009: The security of the site, the development and the restoration of the equipment and the collections that ensured the re-opening of the Garden to the public in 2009;
- Between 2009 and 2012: training to officers in order to maintain and expand the Garden, improving the quality of the site, welcoming the public and also increasing its scientific scope.

Partners and funding

The cooperation in the waste management sector brought the Wilaya city of Algeria, the Paris city council, The Department Council of the Bouches-du-Rhône, The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (FMFA) and the Algerian Ministry of the environment together. The cost of the project amounted to €150,000 of which €18,000 was co-funded by FMFA. The cooperation in the sector for development of green spaces brought the Wilaya of Algeria, the Paris city council and the FMFA together. The cost of the project amounted to €150,000 of which €20,000 was co-funded by FMFA.

Results

More than 1800 Algerian officers have been trained in the school of cleaning since 2007. This school has become the key-location for improving the skills of the NET COM officers. The master plan for collection and treatment of wastes has been carried out in line with the implementation of the “National Household Waste Management Plan”.

Regarding the restoration of the Test Garden, the presence of one million visitors per year is a proof to the success of this cooperation. An important green space in the city-centre, the garden plays a crucial role in representing the place for leisure activities and stroll in a city that otherwise lacks green space. The school for horticulture and the laboratories for the Garden serve as a place for training and scientific research in order to preserve the biodiversity and botany. Finally, the school of nature welcomes the academic groups, regarded as a holiday centre for school children and is considered as an important tool to create awareness among the younger generation. The first publication of this type since the 1960s, the illustrated guide of the Algerian flora co-published by two Cities in 2012 provides an invaluable support for training.

Advantages and reproducibility

The successful involvement of the school of cleaning has led to an ongoing deliberation on the opportunity to participate in a similar project with the Tunisian partners from the city of Paris.

Challenges faced

The awareness among users continues to be a serious issue, having given the persistence of practices detrimental to the cleanliness in Algeria. At the institutional level, the continuity of the exchanges between the two communities apart from this cooperative plan also poses a challenge.



Perspectives

There was a pause in these exchanges after the completion of those two projects. The visit of the Mayor of Paris to Algeria in November 2013 revived the dynamics. Two technical missions for identifying new cooperative approaches are in progress. Among the fields considered are the unhealthy environment, the green plan that is vital for Algeria, the urban mobility and the restoration of the hyper centre.

Source:

City council of Paris

The driving force of the elected representatives and the civil society in the partnership between Zeist, Netherlands and Berkane, Morocco

The cooperative agreement was signed in 2003. If the municipal associations in Netherlands, VNG International support the structuring of the exchanges, those will first depend on both the municipal administrations and the associative network of their territory. Strengthening the bonds of friendship and a mutual understanding in citizens from both the cities outline the foundation of this partnership.

Initial challenges and objectives

At the outset of the cooperation, a visit was made from the mayor of Zeist to Berkane, North-Eastern city of Morocco, where the majority of the original population is of Moroccans origin from Zeist. To establish relations between the two cities for strengthening the alliance of the young Moroccans has been an important motive for the Zeist municipality during difficult social and economic situations faced by the young immigrants since 2000. Berkane, on its part, is seeking acknowledgement from the European cities to fight against its geographic isolation. The city near the Algerian border is suffering since many years from the closing of the borders because of differences of opinion between the two countries in the matters concerning Western Sahara.

Projects

In the beginning, the exchanges spread from the local institutions of the two cities to the hospital, the schools and the retirement homes in particular. In Zeist, a Zeist-Morocco platform, that brings together the associations involved in the partnership together, was introduced in 2003 to support the municipality in the management of the partnership. It is supported by ICCO, the inter-church organisation for cooperation in development. A convention on the management of the wastes and the protection of the environment was signed in 2007 in order to promote competent municipal departments in this sector at Berkane. The technical officers from Zeist and also from the Province of Utrecht and Afvalzorg, the private agency in charge of the wastes were involved all through the partnership. The project that promotes the participation of youngsters in local activities, allows creating a group for youngsters in order to build a garden in the hospital premise in Berkane. The role of the manager of the international cooperation at Zeist was decisive for hosting these exchanges between the youngsters from both cities and to be able to carry them forward. In every city, the social welfare, public health and the management of waste departments have also contributed to this cooperation and the association for Man and Environment in Berkane.

Partners and fundings

The MATRA programme of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs funded the pilot phase of the cooperation on the management of the wastes for €38,000 from 2008 to 2010. Zeist receives an annual budget of only €4000 for its international cooperation. In this situation, the objective is to work in coherence with other support programmes and to mutualise the exchanges with several non-State actors committed in working for international solidarity. Several NGOs

and companies have financially supported this partnership, like for example, a Dutch-Moroccan transport company of fruits and vegetables in Berkane.

Advantages

The elected representatives of both cities play a crucial role in this partnership. Every visit to the partner city leads to a serious mobilisation on the activities undertaken. Moreover, within the municipal departments, the allocation of a partner coordinator helps to properly undertake the projects beyond the institutional, cultural and technical challenges faced.

Challenges faced

The challenges faced are more at the cultural and organisational level , manner of communication, working together, and interaction between governance and company.

Perspectives

Today, the partnership is in a transitional phase after the completion of a project cycle three years ago. A technical visit was organised at Berkane in 2013. New priorities of the municipal project have been defined, which include the environment, education, economic autonomy for women and healthcare. The project and partnership opportunities with the NGO are under consideration. By the end of 2014, the mayor of Zeist will visit Berkane to start a new partnership cycle.

Source:

City of Zeist





2. Reports

The official statistics on the number, activity sector and the distribution of the conventions for the twinning agreements or cooperation between the regional authorities of the Maghreb were rarely provided. The Interior ministers of these countries have published the list of the twinning agreements signed by their regional authorities with the exception of Mauritania and Libya. A large majority of the conventions generally signed with the European communities and French community in particular are classified. Several twinning agreements and cooperation also exist among the communities of Greater Maghreb. The information available at its rudimentary stage is reproduced below, even though it is limited. The results are inconsistent as soon as one tries to incorporate the data provided by country.

Morocco⁶

Moroccan community	Twinning community	Country	Date of revival of the twinning agreement
Beni Mellal	Kaedi	Mauritania	1988
Bouskoura	Boumerdas	Tunisia	1986
El Jadida	Nabeul	Tunisia	1985
Kenitra	Hamam-Lif	Tunisia	1982
Khemisset	Ourdanine	Tunisia	1982
Khemisset	Zouerate	Mauritania	1988
Kourigha	Akjoujt	Mauritania	1988
Marrakech	Atar	Mauritania	1989
Marrakech	Sousse	Tunisia	1989
Meknes	Kiffa	Mauritania	1988
Mohammedia	Monastir	Tunisia	1971
Mohammedia	Rosso	Mauritania	1988
Nador	Nema	Mauritania	1988
Rabat Hassan	Nouakchott	Mauritania	1988
Rabat Hassan	Tripoli	Libya	1986
Rabat Hassan	Tunis	Tunisia	1987
Safi	F'Derik	Mauritania	1988
Safi	Sfax	Tunisia	1982
Sale	Ariana	Tunisia	1982
Settat	Selibaly	Mauritania	1988
Taroudant	Aleg	Mauritania	1988
Tétouan	Aioun El Atrouss	Mauritania	1989

With the exception of the previous twinning agreement signed in 1971 between Mohammedia and Monastir in Tunisia, all the twinning agreements between the Moroccan regional authorities and their counterparts from the Greater Maghreb were finalised in 1980s. The international projects of the Moroccan regional authorities focus on the conventions of cooperation established in large majority with the European regional authorities with the exception of two new cases of intra-regional twinning agreements (Temara with Arafat in Mauritania in 2008 and Marrakech with Radamiss in Libya in 2009). Please note that the two Moroccan regions are committed to cooperate with their neighbours since 2000, as shown in the table below.

⁶ The data presented here are excerpts from the 2002, 2004, 2005, 2009 and 2011 editions of the "Municipal corporations in numbers" publication, Ministry of the Interior, Directorate General of the Municipal Corporations, Morocco.

Moroccan region	Foreign partner	Country	Purpose	Date
Rabat-Sale-Zemmour-Zaer	Wilaya of Gorgol	Mauritania	Exchange of experiences and expertise in the fields of environment and the preservation of the cultural heritage.	2004
	Wilaya of Tunis	Tunisia	Partnership in the social-cultural fields, the fine arts, among youth and in the fields of sports, protection of the environment and the restoration of the old medinas.	2003
Souss-Massa-Draa	Wilaya of Manouba	Tunisia	Exchange of experiences concerning the municipal management and partnership in economical, cultural and social fields	2003

Lastly, the experience of the Art Gold programme of the UNDP in Morocco must be highlighted. With the support of this programme, Morocco commits to the South-South cooperation, apart from the exchanges with its neighbours from the Greater Maghreb. Therefore, the programme defines a platform for the country for broadcasting the South-South cooperation. Following the commitments from the memorandum of understanding of the South-South cooperation, prepared in September 2011 at Rabat between Mauritania, Morocco, Senegal and Gabon as a part of the ART GOLD Programme in Morocco, the first cooperation project took place in December 2011 in Mauritania and a technical support project was held in May 2012 in Gabon⁷.

The LOCA MED platform

Initial challenge

Formerly, the PROGOL project united the local government of the Province of Barcelona in Spain with the Tanger-Tetouan Region in Morocco. This project was born from a growing need to reciprocate between the local governments from the two shores of the Mediterranean to promote their institutional strength. This partnership is a part of the effective undertakings of the local public policies of the municipal law and the advanced regionalisation project in Morocco. With the Municipal Development Plans (MDP), the municipalities now carry an improved framework for the cooperation with the civil society.

Approach and objectives

With the initiative of the Moroccan Centre of Research and Development (MCRD) and the Barcelona Council, the "LOCAL MED Platform" brings more than twenty city councils of the Barcelona province and the Tanger-Tetouan region together. Its objective is to transform the local public policies, obtain social cohesion and the participation of the citizens in local activities through a shared learning space.

⁷ Final evaluation report of the Art Gold programme, UNDP Morocco, 2007-2012.



Projects

Accompanied with study tours, five meetings are organised in relation to the exchange of experiences between the municipalities of both the sides for the local economic promotion, resources to boost the economic network of the territory through the cooperation, participation of the citizens in the management of local public affairs, evaluation of the public policies and the business cooperation opportunities.

Simultaneously, 3 interdisciplinary technical assistances and 7 bilateral technical assistances are introduced based on the priorities of the municipalities. For example, the energy efficiency policy of the municipality in Rubi, presented at one of the five seminars, aroused a lot of interest among the Moroccan municipalities. The elected representatives and the local government officers from these city councils met in early 2014 to study the measures taken at Rubi and their possible practical application in their municipality, especially in matters concerning energy converters, rationalising their functioning and the consumption of energy.

Concurrently and in collaboration with the LOCAL MED platform, a technical exchange was also implemented in the municipality of Larache in Morocco as a part of a European project, for developing its policy to access information and improves the offers provided by the public services. A technical visit was made to three local councils in Catalonia (Sant Feliu, Sant Boi et Sabadell) to identify the procedures and the resources to be provided, such as the right to the access of information, the database management, opening an information desk for the citizens, the working of the Claims Handling Office, the training in the ICT and the recruitment of the service providers.

Partners

9 urban municipalities from the Tanger-Tetouan region in Morocco and 14 local councils from the province of Barcelona. The network coordination was provided by the CMRD and the Barcelona Council with the input from the network of Strategic Cities. The technical assistance was provided by the NGO Proyecto Local.

Fundings

- Barcelona Council: €141,542.80
- Moroccan municipalities: €6,900.00
- Moroccan Centre for the Research and Development: €14,400.00

Results

Since the partnership is at its initial stage, it is premature to expect lasting results. Nevertheless, the live product is already producing some results. More than 20 local elected representatives and hundred territorial local government officers are involved in this partnership on the basis of their area of expertise. Following the exchanges on experiences, new sector-specific road maps were created and locally implemented by the Moroccan municipalities.

In the field of business cooperation, for example, the strategic lines are defined in order to expand the private partnerships in the following four sectors: energy efficiency, tourism, agribusiness and social economy. Today, through these bilateral technical assistances with the Moroccan municipalities, it is possible to obtain these resources.

Finally, the partnership has a certain political impact: it secures the decentralised cooperation between these two regions and the local policies of social cohesion. The effective participation of the local and regional elected representatives in the activities, the continuous involvement of the competent players for every range of activities like the Moroccan Association for the evaluation of the Public Policies or the Chambers of Commerce have been achieved because of this partnership.

Advantages and reproducibility

The project on the network, using the platform creates a rippling effect for the decentralised cooperation. It observes the municipalities together, allowing them to take a global view of their local projects by exchanging them with other municipalities and identifying their technical assistance opportunities and requirements in a better way.

Challenges faced

The institutional phenomenon specific to every municipality led to inactivity in the beginning. This could be surpassed due to the signing of the bilateral cooperation agreements and the follow-up of the meetings achieved with the help of the project coordination. The exchanges also depend on the political pace of every territory. Hence, for example, the start of the project had to be postponed because of the municipal election in Catalonia.

Perspectives

The second phase of the project, which lasted for 18 months was planned directly after 2014 since there were many opportunities and several mutual challenges. Generally speaking, the platform offers a unique opportunity to benefit from the good practices and to bring both the public and private players together from the two regional territories that safeguard the strong historic, cultural and economic relations. More specifically, this second phase will aim at expanding the municipal partnerships in order to compare, systematise and evaluate the public policies of the social cohesion implemented. Lastly, it also aims at combining the local strategies and the durability of these alliances in the institutional, cultural, economic and social fields.

Source:

Barcelona Council

In Algeria⁸

Wilaya of Algeria	Algerian community	Partner community	Country	Type of agreement and date of signing
Tlemcen	Municipality of Tlemcen	Fes	Morocco	Social, economic and cultural twinning agreement – 02/11/1988
Oran	Municipality of Oran	Nouadhibou	Mauritania	Twinning agreement procedure – 01/06/1989
Tlemcen	Municipality of Tlemcen	Kairouan	Tunisia	Economic social and cultural twinning agreement – 05/07/1973
Oran	Municipality of Oran	Sfax	Tunisia	Twinning agreement – June 1989

⁸ Data extracted from the site of the Algerian Interior Ministry and the municipal corporations: <http://www.interieur.gov.dz/Dynamics/frmltem.aspx?html=11&s=5>



In Tunisia⁹

Countries having partnership communities with the Tunisian communities	Number of twinning agreements	Number of projects	Comments
Algeria	5	23	Development started in the 1970s and the exchanges have been taking place since the 1990s.
Morocco	14	26	With a few rare exceptions (Ariana-Sale, Monastir- Mohammedia), the exchanges are mainly cultural.
Libya	1	7	The cooperation between Hammam-Lif and Zaouia is unresolved. Bengazi, Sousse and Sfax are working together on the environmental issues within the Med-City network.
Mauritania	1	8	Some common strategies of the two Ministries in charge of the municipal corporations, if not exclusively of the exchanges between the official delegations.

In order to fill out this information, the National Federation of Tunisian cities (NFTC) sent a questionnaire to the executives in charge of the decentralised cooperation in Tunis, Bizerte, Kairouan, Sfax, Ariana, Nabeul and Dar Chaabane Elfehri in 2013¹⁰.

The results of this enquiry reveal the following trends. Historically speaking, a large majority of the twinning agreements in the intra-Maghreb regions was prepared in 1970s and 1980s with a protocol, often after courtesy visits and meetings during cultural festivals or on the basis of the similar names in the municipalities. The terms of convention in the twinning agreements signed remain unclear and are not based on the clearly defined objectives. According to the people surveyed by the NFTC, the absence of strategy and the lack of true political will between the two twinning parties are the most significant reasons, causing the disruption of the twinning agreements. The national political considerations are also taken into account, like freezing the cooperation with Algeria during the black decade in the 1990s. In such situations, no action plan was implemented, let alone, evaluated or capitalised.

The modernisation of the civil state of the Tunisian cities in cooperation with the AIMF

International Association of Francophone Mayors (AIMF) brought together the elected representatives from 50 countries. It offered a opportunity for exchanging ideas and dialogues on the practices of territorial management to the elected representatives and the executives of the territorial administration. It is the Francophone user for the decentralised cooperation and provides, in this framework, a support for its members in the fields of the decentralisation, local governance and long lasting socio-economic development.

Member of the AIMF since 1979, Tunis is seen as a pioneer in Tunisia. The city has taken care of several roles within the association and has encouraged several protests. Monastir, Sfax and Sousse joined the network in the early 1980-1990s and Bizerte joined later in 2001. Gafsa, Kasserine and Siliana are associated with the AIMF since the revolution in 2011. Lastly, the National Federation of Tunisian cities is also a member of the AIMF.

⁹ Data sent by the National Federation of the Tunisian cities.

¹⁰ Survey carried out by the end of 2013 by Saber Houchati and Bouraoui Ouni, NFTC.

Approach and strategies

The Tunisian experience and originality can be found in the global nature of the approach. For the first time, a pilot project on the computerisation of the Civil Status was implemented in Tunis. The efficient management of the civil status is actually a transitional task for the communities. It ensures the good functioning of the elections and also the development of the local tax system. This successful experience is shared with other cities in the South who are members of the AIMF. While dealing with a mutual approach, Monastir, Sousse and Sfax in Tunisia were built on the lines of Tunis to modernise their management tool.

Results and advantages

The cooperation between the AIMF and the Tunisian cities is a good example. It is a matter of decentralised cooperation since every city is provided with a customised system catering to its actual requirements. But every city must consider the pilot-project of Tunis, which in a way has provided strategic training to interns from other cities.

These projects adhere to the concepts of cooperation initiated by the AIMF: dialogue, exchange of information, modernisation of the structures, assistance in improving democracy, especially with the computerisation of the civil status. Apart from this, the speed of execution of the programs and the financial control of the projects due to the budget limits enforced by the Office have been respected as well.

Lastly, the Tunisian engineering company, which created the management software, SIDES, for the AIMF, has become an important partner of the association. The executives of this company, adopting the work methods of the AIMF and its performing spirit, train the staff from the Southern cities to use the software. This company, at present, is acknowledged by the international sponsors such as the World Bank or the European Union.

Funding

For all the Tunisian cities participating in the cooperation, the grants attributed to the modernisation of the municipal departments amounts to €640,000 (computerisation of the civil status, stock management and procurement, rolling stock fleet and lastly, the financial services). Four multimedia centres have been introduced through a grant of €120,000. Several public equipment have been restored, cleaned, introduced or modified again for an amount of €1,723,000. A grant of €83,000 enabled the introduction of the supervisory body for the civil state in Tunis in 2007. Lastly, a support program for the solidarity and social economy and also for the modernisation is in progress (through a funding of €112,000).

Source:

AIMF

3. Elements of analysis

Based on the hope that the decentralised cooperation can provide on several platforms for the cities in the South, Abdelghani Abouhani, professor at the National Institute of Urban Planning and Development in Rabat explains, "The excitement of the twinning agreement has enveloped the Moroccan cities since 1976 and in less than 20 years, more than 100 twinning agreements have been finalised. Nevertheless, the results are very limited: the twinning agreements have been very weak in terms of economic exchanges. In most cases, they are limited to periodic visits exchanged between the municipal officers of the partner cities. The failure in this form of cooperation is explained by poor financial resources that has affected it and also by the ambiguous choice of partner and most importantly due to lack of initiatives by the municipal corporations¹¹. Several factors can actually be invoked to explain the poor development of the decentralised cooperation among countries of the Greater Maghreb.

¹¹ The decentralised cooperation: a ray of hope for the cities in the South? In Morocco, Abdelghani Abouhani.



a. An unfavourable national and regional environment

A heterogeneous zone where a single dynamic of exchanges dates back to the creation of the AMU

The five countries from the Arab Maghreb formed a heterogeneous group depending on people, the level of development and most importantly, the recent political history. Since their independence, these countries have implemented different political and economic models, which for most countries have come with serious violent upheavals. The challenges concerning the security and stability represent a serious priority for the countries in the region. The strong political will required to unify such an area is always lacking, including the creation of the Arab Maghreb in 1989. This regional zone is least connected with the world. The AMU has not held any summit since many years. The borders between Morocco and Algeria are always closed. Algeria, a very important country in the zone owing to its demographic influence and its geographic position seems to be hindering the progress. This failure weighs heavily on the economic and social development in the region and paralyzes the exchanges. In this situation, the international exposure of the regional authorities is rarely achieved in favour of the neighbouring countries despite being more or less similar on the cultural, religious and linguistic background. Nonetheless, it was an exceptional period. In the 1980s, the preparation and the signing of the Treaty of Marrakech that created the AMU, created a driving force for unification and exchanges in the region. Several twinning agreement protocols were signed during this period.

The obstacles faced by the national diplomacies

The disagreements between the States and the above-mentioned situation are reflected in the bilateral cooperation between the States of the Arab Maghreb, who are not in favour of the decentralised cooperation. For example, in September 2000, the Ministries of the Interior of Morocco and Tunisia signed a convention, conforming to the cooperation in the fields of central and local administration. As a part of this convention, a “Joint cooperation committee in the field of territorial and local administration” was introduced¹². It only met once in 2001 despite the expectations from the municipalities and the civil society. An annual cooperative programme based on the exchange of visits and expertise have however been acknowledged as a plan to stimulate the existing twinning agreements.

Political will is unquestionably lacking. In addition to the ineffective frameworks, since they were prepared without any dialogue with other local players.

On the level of national diplomacies, the absence of strategy for the decentralised cooperation is also an obstacle faced during the exchanges. The legal frameworks of the decentralised cooperation are either limited or at its initial stage, this type of international project is however, barely supported by the States. In the absence of any support, for example, from the diplomatic network, strategic orientation and support in terms of advice and finance, the communities are gradually progressing with every case depending on the meetings and opportunities.

In Tunisia, the establishment of a suitable institutional structure is under way with two priorities on hand: The introduction of a national authority with a standardised strategy and the reform of the National Federation of Tunisian cities.

The pressure of the state control on the regional authorities

The countries of the Arab Maghreb are highly centralised countries with the exception of Morocco that recently introduced some important reforms of decentralisation and regionalisation. In all cases, the state supervision remains unquestionable for the regional authorities. The constraint of the administrative procedures is an element discouraging the international projects. In the case of decentralised cooperation with the European communities, it is common for activities to slow down or get interrupted because of the pressure put by the supervisory authority on the approval procedures. We can easily imagine the efforts involved in the case of partnerships between the communities of two highly centralised countries.


¹² In Tunisia, no institutional framework falling under the territorial cooperation is signed with other countries in the zone.

The current limitations and the potential of the associations of regional authorities

Given the centralised nature of the political systems, the national associations representing the local powers in these countries are either absent (in Libya¹³) or in its initial stage or exploited politically (as was in the case of Tunisia up to 2011) Contrary to the European countries, the absence or the shortcoming of these associations deprives the regional authorities from having wider scope for exchanges, sharing ideas and providing training in this field. It also deprives them from having a speaker towards the Central state and the foreign partners during the dialogues on the local administration. Abdelghani Abouhane points out that, “In the absence of such a structure, the municipal corporations only interact with modest resources by relying on the personal connections that they have maintained with their foreign counterpart. The partnerships are created at random due to which the projects sometimes succeed or fail sometimes.”¹⁴ The situation has developed with the gradual structuring of the national associations, aware of the role played by them for coordination, support and training and with the compliance of the regional authorities with the international networks such as the AIMF and the UCLG that offers areas for exchanges and sharing ideas.

b. The twinning arrangements and the decentralised cooperation, yet to become a widespread practice

The low financial resources make these communities witness a low level of development¹⁵ combined with the limited financial decentralisation



These are reasons responsible for representing the communities of Maghreb as poor players. In 2013, the expenses carried out in Tunisia under the decentralised cooperation did not exceed 822 000 Tunisian Dinars (about 380,000 Euros), either for the bilateral cooperation or for adherence of the local Tunisian municipal corporations to the associations and regional and international organisations. For the cooperation with other partners in the South, only 70,000 Tunisian Dinars (about 30,000 Euros) were spent, which hardly represents 8% of the total expenses¹⁶. The decentralised cooperation is often regarded as an opportunity to fund for the public infrastructures and the services for the population. With this approach in mind, the partners are now being looked out for in Europe. The Maghreb communities are represented as the “aid recipients”. The dialogue with France in particular has been emphasised due to cultural and linguistic similarities among the elites, the field knowledge and the support for services offered by the French Embassy on site. This movement comes at the expense of exchanges, which is more horizontal with the neighbouring countries and in a way more familiar with the South-South approach.

The absence of information about the local elected representatives and their administrations

Besides the financial resources, the qualification of the municipal officers and the local elected representatives pose a challenge to the development of the cooperation. Very few communities have a staff that is trained and ready for the management of such partnerships, who are expected to have an insight to the allocations, capacities and procedures, languages, negotiation techniques and the project management. The partnerships are neither the subject of the monitoring nor evaluation. They are carried out case by case, without a defined strategy, which limits the possibility of continuity of exchanges, especially following the change in the municipal teams. In Morocco, the decentralisation of the supervisory power towards the local authorities, in what has been called the community tutelage, has also produced a negative effect on the monitoring of the projects. In these situations, the relations between the communities of the Greater Maghreb was mainly limited to formal and limited exchanges, based on the random choice of the partners.

¹³ According to the French Embassy in Libya, the local associations representing the elected representatives are gradually putting themselves together, for example, in Benghazi.

¹⁴ Op. cit.

¹⁵ For this geographical area, the Human development Index ranking in the Report on the human development 2013 UNDP globally ranks Libya at the 64th position and Mauritania at the 155th, giving it the last position in the list of global ranking.

¹⁶ Data sent by the National Federation of the Tunisian cities.



The highly informal and inconspicuous partnerships

It was agreed not to underestimate the existence of such cooperation in Arab Maghreb. The relations between the municipalities date back to several decades. They may be based on a geographic proximity on either side of the border or a similar economic development as in the case of Annaba in Algeria and Bizerte in Tunisia. The main difference with the European decentralised cooperation is that these relations are very informal. On the one hand, they are not the subject of the same type of communication. On the other hand, they have not (yet) drawn any inspiration for the theoretical idea in favour of this practice. As a result they remain inconspicuous and unknown.

CoMun: A multi-level approach to facilitate the exchanges between Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia

A multilevel approach

CoMun is a regional programme for the urban development and the local governance that is based on a network of exchanges in progress between the cities of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. More than about thirty Moroccan and Tunisian cities have profited from a technical support for the management of the urban wastes, the energy efficiency, the urban mobility, the development of the medinas and the local governance. At the national level, several thematic networks are organised. The objective in the end is to initiate a regional network that promotes the exchanges between the cities and the citizens of Maghreb. In addition to this dynamics, the programs facilitate the decentralised cooperation between the German cities and Maghreb cities. This helped highlighting the expertise acquired especially within the framework of integration between the two German administrative systems (one that is centralised and the other that is strongly centralised) in the 1990s.

Initial challenge

The three countries in Maghreb have witnessed a very high rate of urbanisation, which should reach 70% in 2030 according to the predictions of the UN Habitat. The management capacities like the resources in the municipalities are mostly inadequate in relation to the challenges faced in the infrastructures, the accommodation, the protection of the environment, the adaptation to the climatic changes as well as the promotion of the local economy.

Projects

1. At the national level: Networking and technical support

Two types of projects are implemented: the technical support for the cities in the integrated planning of their territory (training, project support, funding research) and organising thematic networks for the cities in the countries concerned.

Agadir, Beni Mellal and Kenitra in Morocco are, for example, backed with mid-term plan for their urban waste management in an integrated way. Bamberg provides, within this framework, a technical support for the research design, the management and opening for the tenders and the development of specific projects.

2. The regional network and the intra-Maghreb exchanges

For example, a Moroccan-Tunisian workshop on the energy efficiency was held in Sfax, with the support of Munich in September 2013. The national strategies to include the energy issue in the urban planning can be compared. The Moroccan network REMME, specialist in the energy efficiency, for example, was approached by the Tunisian partners who hoped to set up a similar structure in their country.

3. The decentralised cooperation with the German cities

Following the study tours organised by CoMun, the local elected representatives from Monastir in Tunisia and Munster in Germany committed, for example, to cooperate on the youth policy, based on the experience of the Youth Council in Munster.

Partners and funding

In Morocco, the program was supported by the General Directorate of the Local Authorities (DGLA) of the Interior Ministry and Moroccan Chairmen Association of the Municipal Councils (AMPCC), implemented in cooperation with the National Institute of Development and Urban Planning. In Tunisia, the programme was also handled by the DGLA and implemented in cooperation with the Training and Support Centre for decentralisation and the National Federation of Tunisian cities. The financial partners of the program are the German Federal Ministry of the Economic and Development Cooperation and the German Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The training programme on the new approaches recommended for the urban development in Morocco and Tunisia is funded by the Robert Bosch Foundation. Several institutional partners participated in the initiative among which include the Association of German cities (Deutscher Städtetag), the Association of the Dutch cities (VNG) and the Marseille Centre for the Mediterranean integration (CMIM)

Primary results

Due to this network, the exchange of experiences has already been achieved. In Morocco, the monitoring system for the waste management in Tanger was adopted in Beni Mellal. Similarly, the expertise on sorting at the source, which was developed in Beni Mellal was forwarded to Agadir. It should be noted that the recent constitutional reforms in Morocco have facilitated the cooperation with the local governments and has opened up new leeway.

Advantages and reproducibility

The networking in itself represents a primary advantage of the programme, which is a new experience for the Maghreb cities. The issues faced by these cities are often similar, which increases both the advantage of a mutual idea on the local solutions and the relevance of the exchanges on the successes or the failures acknowledged. The primary results of CoMun reveal the potential created by the mobilisation. For example, the member cities of the Moroccan network from the old medinas, introduced by CoMun, together drafted an action plan in order to define their position vis-a-vis the central government and to propose micro-projects. Structured in a network, they have become an important player in the national dialogue. The exchange of expertise with the German cities represents the second important advantage of CoMun. The study trips within the local administration are organised, an advice-support is provided upon request to the cities participating in the programme and the professional internships in the German local administration are simplified.

Challenges faced

The constraints are faced in the national political context, which are very different in these three countries. Due to a favourable institutional framework, the activities are swiftly developing in Morocco. In Tunisia, the strong commitment towards an international exposure led to an early restoration of the projects after the revolution in 2011. The partnership with an interim government and the municipal representatives belonging to the special delegations in the absence of local elections still poses a challenge. In Algeria, which is at least a centralised country, working with the municipalities still pose a challenge despite the interest expressed by them. In relation to this contrast in the national situations, the attitude towards the cross-border exchanges between the municipalities of Maghreb met with some doubts and resistance among the partners concerned at the beginning of the programme. Far from being a spontaneous approach, the intra-Maghreb cooperation should display its potential in local solutions and exchange of experiences, which today is acknowledged as strength of CoMun.





Source:

Secretariat of the CoMun programme.

III. THE SUPPORT OF THE SPONSORS

1. The European Union

In its development cooperation programmes, the European Union does not consider the Arab Maghreb as a specific region. On the one hand, Mauritania is associated with Africa-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP), which, because of Cotonou agreement, profits from a privileged partnership with the EU, based on a detailed political dialogue, the business relations and a strong cooperation in several fields. On the other hand, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia have become a part of what the EU has called “neighbouring” zone, which includes the Southern shore of the Mediterranean and the countries present on the Eastern border. Each of these three countries is related with the EU through an Association Agreement. Libya, does not have any contractual relations with the EU. Since it is not a member to the Barcelona acquis, it does not participate in the European politics in the neighbouring area. Meanwhile, since the fall of the Gaddafi regime, the EU has actively supported Libya in its transition and has initiated several cooperative programmes.

The EU supports the regional authorities across all disciplines as players contributing to the development of their country. This support is achieved by making the communities eligible for several funding programmes of the EU, wherein a part of the “Organisation of the civil society and local authorities in the development” program in particular has been dedicated to them since 2007¹⁷. Besides, it is politically strengthened since 2013 through the Communication “Provide increased autonomy to the local authorities in the partner countries for better governance and more concrete results on the development”¹⁸. This Communication explains the strategy of the European Commission to improve its partnership with the local authorities through its programs and during the budget period, which extends from 2014 to 2020. We can point out that the European Commission does not specifically encourage the decentralised cooperation as partnership between several regional authorities from the North and the South. It intends to gradually support the regional authorities from the South directly, that can enjoy a partnership with a community or an association when they wish to have it.

a. The geographic programs of the European Commission

In Mauritania

The European Development Fund (EDF) is the main instrument for the European political cooperation with the ACP countries. Since 2001, 397 million Euros has been granted by the EDF to Mauritania¹⁹. The National Indicative Programme (NIP) defines the assisted sectors of the EU in Mauritania. One chapter in it is dedicated to the strategy for strengthening the capacities of the local players of development and decentralisation at the local level.

It is in this context that the institutional reinforcement programme for the municipal corporations and their services (PERICLES) was implemented in 2008. This programme is the result of the coordination between different support initiatives for decentralisation. The EU has contributed 7.5 million Euros and the Spanish, French and German cooperation together have contributed 6 million.

¹⁷ The programme, initially called ANE-AL, which was renamed to OSC-AL for the period lasting from 2014-2020.

¹⁸ Communication of the European commission, 15 May 2013: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/civil-society/documents/com_2013_280_local_authorities_in_partner_countries_fr.pdf

¹⁹ European Union Commission in Mauritania: http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/mauritania/eu_mauritania/dev_cooperation/index_fr.htm

The purpose of the EU is to establish the municipalities as organisers of development by means of neighbourhood structures, the centres for resources; support the General Directorate of the regional authorities in the management of the decentralisation process and contribute to the overhaul of the funding system of the communities. The EDF also allows other thematic entries for the communities, which could profit from the co-funding for the projects related to the food security, water, environment, solar energy through programmes like Water Facility, for example. Nevertheless, these programmes do not provide any specific section for the decentralised cooperation.

In Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia

These three countries have participated in the European Neighbourhood Idea, the funding for which was significantly increased in the period 2014-2020 (15.4 billion Euros). The two characteristics of this new instrument are granting the incentives to countries that have advanced the most in the reforms and securing the funding in a flexible and smooth manner. This instrument is available in three sections:

Bilateral programmes for a large part of the funding. The reinforcement of the human rights and fundamental freedoms, the Rule of law, the equality, the sustainable democracy, the good governance and the prosperity of the civil society appear on the list of priorities. These programmes are negotiated with every State and the State takes the responsibility of implementing it.

Apart from the 240 million Euros granted by the National Indicative Programme (NIP) of Tunisia for the period 2011-2013, the European Commission encourages, for example, the political transition and the economic development of this country by providing an additional annual budget of 400 million Euros. In 2011, the EU granted a special measure to Tunisia through a support programme in less favoured areas for a sum of 20 million Euros. It transformed thirteen interior governorates in the country. Another example, the Support programme for the association agreement and the neighbourhood action plan to support many twinning agreements like the project for strengthening the institutional capacities of the Training and Support Centre for Decentralisation (TSCD) implemented in collaboration with NSA (National School of Administration) France in 2012. Strictly speaking, it does not concern the direct cooperation between the regional authorities²⁰.

The regional programmes, which respond to the mutual challenges faced by several or all countries. From 2007 to 2013, 21 projects involving the communities from the neighbouring countries were implemented as a part of the CIUDAD programme, Cooperation in the Urban development and Dialogue²¹. In all, 7 Moroccan communities, 5 Tunisian communities and 2 Algerian communities have taken part in this multi-country programme. These partnerships based over programmes do not fall under, strictly speaking, the category of long-term decentralised cooperation. However, they bring the communities together that share common issues and exchange the expertise focused on a sector. For example, quoting the project “to reinvent the new cities” that brought Marne la Valle in France, Tanger in Morocco, Sidi Abdellah in Algeria and the city of the “15th of May city” in Egypt together over an urban renovation programme.

The SUDEP programme, a project for the demonstration of the Urban development on sustainable energy, has taken over the CIUDAD since January 2014. The purpose is to support the regional authorities of the neighbourhood in their policy concerning the energy efficiency, increase in energy saving and use of renewable sources of energy. The first call for proposals from the neighbouring communities in the South was initiated for a sum of 8.25 million Euros in the first semester of 2014²².

In response to the Communication of the European Commission of 2011 called “A new strategy for a changing neighbourhood”²³, the SPRING programme, Support for Partnership, Reform and Inclusive growth was implemented with 350 million Euros following the Arab spring. In Algeria, a programme to support the governance was, for example, adopted for 10 million Euros to improve the access to the justice, the fight against corruption and to encourage the participation of the citizens and to improve the management of public finances.

²⁰ European Union Commission in Tunisia: http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/tunisia/eu_tunisia/tech_financial_cooperation/index_fr.htm

²¹ For more information please log on to: <http://www.ciudad-programme.eu>

²² The call for proposals was published on the GD DEVCO website of the European Commission.

²³ Joint Commission of the High Representative of the Union for the Foreign Affairs and Security policy and the European Commission, 25 May 2011: http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/pdf/com_11_303_fr.pdf



The short term support and technical assistance projects, twinning agreements, short-term trainings offered by the experts from public institutions affiliated with the EU (with the TAIEX programme) are implemented but no mechanism for the cooperation between the communities have been facilitated yet²⁴.

The cross-border cooperative programmes between the member countries of the EU and the partner countries that share a common border. The regional communities, and most of all, the regions are the main players in this programme. Between 2007 and 2013, the “Mediterranean basin” programme for a sum of 200 million Euros was funded for the regional scale projects in the Mediterranean zone²⁵. Three Moroccan regions, fourteen Algerian wilayas, thirteen Tunisian governorates and sixteen Libyan districts were qualified for this programme. Several types of players took part in the funding projects and the communities in the civil society participated in the programme organised by the universities and research centres. For example, the “New cities for the Mediterranean Basin” brought together the city of Latina, Sicile region and the Oristano province for Italy, the Eordea municipalities in Greece, Tyre in Libya and Maamoura in Tunisia. The Maritime regions of Tunisia also participated in this Italy-Tunisia programme. The priorities of the CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme for the period lasting from 2014-2020 are the economic development, the education and the research, the social inclusion and the protection of the environment.

b. The thematic programs of the European Commission

The five countries in the zone, their regional authorities and their associations are qualified for the thematic programmes. Awarded after selecting from the tender offers, the funding of the “Civil City Organisations and the Local Authorities” programme (OSC-LA) was about 35 million Euros per year for the period between 2007 and 2013. In Mauritania, three call for proposals were announced to the Mauritanian municipalities (and European municipalities too, when they were in partnership with Mauritania) for 1 million Euros for the period between 2009 and 2010 combined, for 500,000 Euros in 2011, and 1 million Euros in 2013. For every call for proposals, the information meeting is organised by the Delegation of the EU. Training on the preparation of the European reports was also conducted in June 2013. In 2010, 7 projects were granted in the fields of support for the governance and the community investment (Urban Community of Nouakchott), in support of the project control (Keur Macene) and the inter-community management of the water resources (five communities of the Gorgol wilaya). In 2011, two projects were granted. One was related to the drafting of a municipal development plan in Djonaba and the other, the promotion of the local initiatives organised for the wilaya of Assaba.

In Algeria, two projects in relation with the local governance were implemented by the OSC-LA programme between 2007 and 2013. One was carried out by the El Gaith association with 34 municipalities of the Bordj Bou Arreridj wilaya to strengthen the associative network capacities of the rural and community development. The other was implemented by the Projecto Local association and focussed on strengthening the local democracy and the associative life in Morocco and Algeria.

The European instrument for the democracy and the human rights, with a total amount of 1.1 billion Euros for the period lasting from 2007-2013, was also made available to the communities and associations of Arab Maghreb. Its budget is about 1.3 billion Euros for the period lasting from 2014-2020. Although the organisations of the civil society are focused upon more for its design and its thematic field, this programme is the least acknowledged in the regional communities. One of the objectives of the new budget period is to provide more exposure to its players, for example, through the common projects undertaken by other partner communities and European communities or their associations.

In Libya, the Civil Initiative Project (CIP) is the only project undertaken by the EU that focuses on the strategies of the local development. The purpose of the project, initially implemented in Zawia and in Benghazi, is to unite the players of the territorial management despite their diversity and to jointly identify the problems and the opportunities faced by it. Having given the difficult transition period and the legal and political uncertainties that result from it, the project can be qualified as the pilot project with a limited objective, which profits from the significant activity taking place in the Libyan cities despite everything and in this difficult situation.

²⁴ European Union Delegation in Algeria: http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/algeria/eu_algeria/political_relations/index_fr.htm

²⁵ For more information please log on to: <http://www.enpicbcmc.eu>

2. The other sponsors

Besides the European Union, the financial multilateral partners committed in the local development sector of the countries in the Arab Maghreb are mainly, the United Nations Programme for the Development (UNPD) and the World Bank. France, Spain, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, United States of America and Japan among others are also active through bilateral cooperation. In Morocco, for example, the American cooperation, USAID provides a training programme for the staff of the municipal management. In Mauritania, the World Bank has promoted an ambitious national Integrated Support Programme jointly with the European Union for the decentralisation, local development and youth employment (PNIDDLE) for a period of ten years. The programme provides an institutional support to the players in the decentralisation process, ensure the funding for the infrastructure and promotes youth employment at the local level. Nevertheless, these programmes directly influence the regional authorities of Maghreb. They do not encourage the exchange of expertise among the communities.

In the spirit of dynamism of the exchanges with the communities of Maghreb, France stands out with two types of project in favour of the decentralised cooperation. Firstly, the French State initiated two support funds, one with the Moroccan state and another with the Tunisian state for the French and Moroccan regional authorities on the one hand and the French and the Tunisian regional authorities on the other hand, and jointly with the support of the decentralised cooperation. These funds are dedicated to strengthen the capacities of the project for the partner municipal corporations. It is provided by the States and co-funds the decentralised cooperation projects. In case of Morocco, the French Ministry of the Foreign Affairs implemented the Cooperative Programme in Morocco (CPM) in coordination with the civil society organisations since 2002. The CPM aims for a large complementarity between the public project and the resources of the civil society for the cooperation. Since 2007, it was agreed to strengthen the participation of the Moroccan and French regional authorities in the programme based on the existing decentralised cooperation partnerships between the two countries. This programme since then has worked with the support from the regional authorities who, representing the public institutions, have implemented the public policies in a region, in relation to the local actors²⁶.

A tripartite partnership between Dunkerque, Bizerte and Annaba

A city to city approach

Dunkerque (France), Annaba (Algeria) and Bizerte (Tunisia) are cities with ports, industries and universities. They have been sharing common issues and challenges since many decades. Two pre-existing relations motivated the establishment of a tripartite partnership. On the one hand, Dunkerque and Annaba saw their economic relation in the steel industry emerge in the 1970s, of which Annaba is the African capital. A cooperative agreement between the Urban community of Dunkerque and the city of Annaba was signed in 2004. On the one hand, cities that are geographically closer to each other, Annaba and Bizerte, signed the twinning agreement in 1984.

Initial challenge

This partnership encouraged new cross-border cooperation between Algeria and Tunisia, all while securing a triangular relation, which until then was primarily based on Dunkerque/Annaba and Annaba/Bizerte relations. From the beginning, the Urban community of Dunkerque (UCD) was also assigned a project to spread this pilot triangular experience to its networks like the French Association of the European municipalities and regions and United Cities France.

²⁶ For more information log on to: <http://pcm.ma>



Approach and objectives

This partnership had an objective of exchanging the expertise on urbanism, now called, SIUD (Support for the Integrated Urban Development). The purpose was to train the technicians from both communities to be professional, introduce an urban planning and development agency in Annaba and to provide Annaba and Bizerte with some observation equipment and urban planning, like a geographical information system and an observatory.

Most of all, the project aimed at strengthening the capacities of the local institutions on urban governance and strategy planning, spreading the dialogue practices and introducing collaboration between the local players.

Projects

- After the meeting held in three cities, the APUDUI took place from 2007 to 2011 across the following five phases:
- Support for the establishment of an urban planning agency in Annaba, preparation of statutory rules for the staff recruitment,
- The project-training of the Algerian and Tunisian technicians in charge of the planning of the territory with a common sea/city interface framework,
- Support for the construction and perpetuity of the equipment in Annaba and Bizerte
- Execution of the first territorial assessment shared in Annaba and Bizerte
- The restoration of the old fabrics and heritage in Annaba

In concrete terms, 13 Algerian, 7 Tunisian and 19 French technicians were directly involved in the activities such as the thematic seminars, the urban study workshops that helped the representatives from the three cities combined (Architects, town planners, engineers) provide their expertise in a development scheme for each of these territories.

Partners and funding

The project united the urban community of Dunkerque, the wilaya and the city of Annaba, Bizerte as well as the urban and development agency of Flandre-Dunker for this technical plan. The project was funded for an amount of €300,000 by the European Commission through its regional MEDPACT programme and €120,000 by the French Agency for the development.

Results

Four significant results can be named from this project:

- The methodological and technical capacities of the local administration of Annaba and Bizerte have improved.
- The relation between Dunkerque and Annaba has improved,
- The relation between Annaba and Bizerte has been renewed.
- A lasting partnership between Dunkerque and Bizerte was finally introduced.

Advantages and reproducibility

After a difficult start owing to the different pace of working of the institutions, a political meeting between the executives of the three cities helped modify the partnership activities and alleviate the situation. The involvement of the elected representatives became an element of driving force. That was a key element in the cooperation between cities. While favouring the exchange of experiences with other MEDPACT projects like the SHAMS project implemented in the same countries, the framework of this European programme also turned out to be an important advantage. Finally, addition of urban workshop sessions had a positive impact due to its reciprocal approach and the practice of allowing local negotiation with a foreign partner through work was encouraged.

Challenges faced

In reality, the tripartite characteristics of the partnership could be considered weak when the difficulties arising from different legal and political situations increases in these three countries. The support from Bizerte, in particular, could only be effective in the last phase of the project because of the administrative obstacles faced by the Tunisian partners. Generally speaking, until its completion in 2011, the project was hindered because of the absence of autonomy among the Algerian and Tunisian partners that had highly centralised systems. In this situation, the commitment to mainly work with the town councils presented a mistake in the assessment of the institutional framework at the beginning. The diversification of the local partners and the strong involvement of the civil society seemed to be the medium for strengthening the relations among the territories.

Perspectives

At the end of the project, the partnership continued in a bilateral fashion. Dunkerque supported Bizerte in the re-appropriation of its urban development with the heritage and the participatory democracy listed among the priorities. In 2011 and 2012, Annaba and Dunkerque worked on the sustainability of the assets as regards urban planning in Annaba with the support from the French Ministry of the Foreign Affairs.

Today the cultural cooperation between Annaba and Dunkerque is very active. It has gone beyond the institutional framework and has swept across domains in the territory, for example, the Higher school of art, therefore guaranteeing the continuity of this partnership.

Source:

Urban community in Dunkerque



IV. A FEW RECOMMENDATIONS

The Arab Maghreb is a changing region where the regional authorities are emerging as players in the national development in some countries more than in others. The development of the legal frameworks for the regional communities, resources to put their initial experiences of twinning agreement into perspective and the increase in the exchange of opportunities have implied several ways to secure these trends.

1. The decentralised cooperation framework: Improve the dialogue, the capacities and the ownership

The introduction of an environment favourable to the development of exchanges is an important pre-condition. In order to achieve this, the parties taking part in the cooperation, primarily the regional authorities, the central government and the international partners, should, in every role, contribute to:

- Making national dialogue interactive and intense on the decentralisation and on respective rights of the State and the regional authorities on international projects, to enhance the potential of the local project and facilitate the ownership of the legal framework by the communities in case of the recent reform, like in Morocco;



- Promoting the areas for formal or informal dialogues between the five countries in the zone apart from the AMU (especially the Union for the Mediterranean, the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly, the “5+5” dialogue Group, the associations of the regional authorities like the International Association of Francophone Mayors, United Cities and Local Governments and the Arab Towns Organisation);
- Supporting the professionalism of the representative associations of the regional communities and to develop their capacity to offer a support, advices and a space for dialogue relating to their international projects to the communities. These structures have also been designed to be the speakers of the State for the relevant issues pertaining to the decentralisation and the local governance and to be able to gather and spread the information, an essential pre-condition for any support policy of the international project;
- Defining a national strategy to support the decentralised cooperation, which, through certain important and thematic approaches (fight against poverty, economic development, training and professional involvement, rehabilitation and restoration of the historical monuments, social inclusion and promotion) and/or geographic approach (list of important countries, cross-border cooperation, presence of a community across the country, in the partner city, etc.), could stimulate exchanges by outlining a framework to the desired communities. These strategic orientations could ensure compliance with the national and local perspectives. Different forms of support handled in a transparent manner, are accessible to all the regional authorities and if possible made available in many languages, which could be designed to add procedure guides and manuals, training to these regional authorities;
- Create awareness and train the elected representatives on their abilities as regards the international partnership, on the opportunities offered by the partnership, the management systems and procedures, the follow-up, the assessment, the marketing, the lobbying affairs, etc. The same applies to the development of the skills for the local administrations, which by way of the management, the administration and the follow up of the municipal projects are true development levers. An example of this is the ambitious programme for training the instructors in decentralisation and decentralised cooperation carried out in Morocco in 2011-2012 by the Interior Ministry with the support of UNDP and in partnership with the ENA of Rabat and the International University of Rabat²⁷.

2. The practice of decentralised cooperation: develop more balanced, formalised and assessed partnerships

The financial partners, the European Commission in particular can apply a leverage by:

- Initiating a joint informal dialogue with these five States, for the time being divided into three different partner groups for the European Union, even though it is about priority partners;
- Thinking, on the lines of the negotiations of the EU with the Oriental Europe and in the spirit of the Communication of 2011 on “A new strategy with respect to the changing neighbourhood, which shall place the national and local democracy at the core of the bilateral cooperation commitments with each of these countries;
- Supporting the development of the decentralised cooperation between the regional authorities within the Arab Maghreb, as testing grounds for governance and the local public services. The regional programme SUDeP could, for example, incorporate such an element with some dedicated funding in the call for proposals, in the years to come;
- Incorporating the players in the decentralised cooperation in an improved way in the decentralisation support programs taking into account their field experiences and the rippling effect that they can produce for bring new municipalities together;

²⁷ Reports on the capitalisation of the 1st and the 2nd Training cycle for the instructors in the decentralisation and decentralised cooperation – 2011-2012, Interior Ministry, General Directorate of the Municipal Cooperation, Morocco.

- Encouraging more cross-border cooperation within Arab Maghreb. The serious institutional and political obstacles in the region has prompted dependence on the concrete elements, like the geographic proximity, the existence of previous exchanges and the mutual economic issues in order to provoke a change. The information efforts on the cross-border cooperation programme of the European Neighbourhood Instrument should be provided by the national delegations of the EU. The eligibility criteria and the thresholds for funding should be diverse so that it ensures a substantial participation of the communities from the region.
- Enhance the quality and the excellence as regards the decentralised cooperation, which promotes a healthy competition, quality, innovation and creativity of the regional authorities. Based on the lines of the past experiences, a regional prize could be introduced to reward the innovative and successful cooperations²⁸;

As regards the application of the decentralisation, the following points could be traced and studied extensively:

- Through training and exchange of experiences between the local administrations, promote the result based management with a regular assessment of the project implemented, and a systematic distribution of the information related to the partnerships and a capitalisation of the experiences;
- Go beyond the traditional division in the cooperation between the “donors” and “recipients” in order to offer a more balanced approach towards research on subjects of mutual interest and a right to equality that is actually put into practice;
- Formalise more relations between the partner communities on the basis of reciprocal commitments, which every partner should be in a position to comply with.



²⁸ Examples : UNPSA (Department of economic and social affairs) through the Winning Medal of the UNO for the Public Service; the European Prize in the Public Sector (EPSA) distributed since 2007 by the European Institute of Public Administration rewarding the best practices as regards innovation and effectiveness of the Public Sector in the European Union; The Innovation Prize for Africa (PIA), a reward introduced by the African foundation for the innovation and the Economic commission of the United Nations for Africa; The e-administration prize “Imtiyaz” awarded every year by the Ministry of the Public Service; The Dubai International Award for the best practices with the purpose of improving the living conditions, started in 1995 in Dubai.



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