



*Meeting Highlights of the Euromed Working Group of EUROCITIES
Barcelona, 25th November 2005*

Opening session

During the opening session, Mr. **Rinaldo BONTEMPI**, Political Delegate of the Mayor of Turin for the relationships with the Mediterranean Region, officially welcomed all the participants thanking them for their attendance. He emphasised the importance of the meeting in the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Process of Barcelona and showed great appreciation for the presence of South and East Mediterranean Partner Cities.

Béchir ODEIMI, CGLU representative for Lebanon, Syria and Jordan gave the regards from the Mayor of Jdeidé, Antoine Gebara, Vice President of the Euromed Working Group for Middle East of EUROCITIES who could not attend the meeting. First of all, **Béchir ODEIMI** thanked the Municipality of Barcelona for hosting the 25th November 2005 meeting and the City of Turin for its active and vital role at the Presidency of the Euromed Working Group; he then showed his great appreciation for the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Barcelona partnership that has been a significant and decisive tool for the strengthening of decentred cooperation in the Mediterranean Region. **Béchir ODEIMI** insisted on the belief that a strict cooperation among the Cities of both sides of the Mediterranean is an important factor in order to guarantee development, peace and stability in a still perturbed Region. The aim of the Euromed Working Group of EUROCITIES is the promotion of bilateral cooperation and real project initiatives. One of the most significant aspects of the activities to be developed in the next few months consists in supporting the realization of training stages for technicians of the Mediterranean Countries, in order to interchange experiences and knowledge. **Béchir ODEIMI** also expressed his hope for new inputs and initiatives involving the Mediterranean Region.

Bérnard ASSO, Vice Mayor of Nice and Vice President of Euromed for Europe, underlined the importance of the November 1995 Barcelona Declaration that has been a key factor for the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, even if it was necessary to strengthen its contents and actions. There are ambitious objectives to meet such as the political stability in the Euro Mediterranean Region and the development of Regions like Maghreb and the Middle East. For this reason a new decentred cooperation framework is needed in order for Cities to play an active and important role. From this point of view, **Bérnard ASSO** highlighted the fundamental lobbying activity towards the European Institutions EUROCITIES is implementing.

Catherine PARMENTIER, General Director of the EUROCITIES network, introduced a summary of the political activities as well as of the lobbying actions implemented by both EUROCITIES and the Euromed Working Group in the year 2005, with regards to the review of the Process of Barcelona and the European Neighbourhood Policy. Particularly, it was emphasised that the year 2005 was a decisive period for the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation due to the Review of the Process of Barcelona. Much "political" work has been done for the building of a team working on the European Neighbourhood Policy together with the Euromed Working Group.

Session: "Introduction of "Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures"

The session was dedicated to the Introduction of "Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures" by **Gianluca SOLERA**, Director of the Foundation Programmes. Particularly, he showed the action priorities of the Foundation as well as the most focused activities and namely: future of the region, difference valorisation, science without frontiers, information society and strengthening of women's role. According to the Anna Lindh Foundation, Cities have a high potential to use and they have to assume an always-increasing importance in the Mediterranean Region.

At the end of his intervention, **Gianluca SOLERA** expressed his wish for cooperation with the Euromed Working Group of EUROCITIES as far as the cultural cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean Region is concerned.

Session: "Introduction of the EUROCITIES Cultural Forum "

Oriol BALAGUER, from the Cultural Institution of Barcelona made an intervention as President of the EUROCITIES Cultural Forum, underlining that during the last Forum meeting the implementation of a cultural cooperation programme was discussed.

The Euro-Mediterranean cooperation has always been linked to the cultural cooperation, and that is the reason why cities should be stimulated to develop programmes of artists' mobility as well as they should foster the interchange of good practices and the strengthening of cultural policies.

Oriol BALAGUER expressed the wish of starting a cooperation with the Euromed Working Group of EUROCITIES concerning the cultural issues, and the possibility of organizing a joint meeting between the Barcelona Forum and the Turin Group was discussed.

Session: "Introduction of the European Association of Markets"

Rinaldo BONTEMPI introduced the European Association of Markets that was officially presented in October 2005 in Turin, during the *Torino Food Market Festival*, organized by the *Conservatoria delle Cucine del Mediterraneo del Piemonte*. With regards to the agreement signed on December 6th 2004 by the Mayors of Barcelona, Lyon and Turin, aiming at addressing the economic promotion, great importance was given to the markets, above all in respect of quality guarantee, sustainability and territory belonging. Barcelona and Turin committed themselves to create an association whose main objective is the promotion of European (and Mediterranean) Cities cooperation regarding markets, an historical factor of the European and Mediterranean lifestyle.

Moreover, the Association has the scope of addressing consumer's protection, food quality and the protection of regional production, quality and sustainable tourism according to the European Union standards.

Round Table on the new "Regional and Local Authorities Forum"

Vanda KNOWLES, Policy Officer for EUROCITIES Governance and International Cooperation, led the round table during which the implementation of the new Regional and Local Authorities Forum promoted by the City of Barcelona was discussed.

The idea of creating such a Forum already came up in 1995 but it didn't have a real success. With the review of the Process of Barcelona and the recent initiative of the European Parliament called "Reviewed Process of Barcelona", the opportunity of creating an Institution giving voice to regional and local authorities was reconsidered.

According to some of the networks attending the session (i.e. ARCO LATINO and MEDCITIES), a deeper analysis of the function and activities of the Forum was needed. For this reason, the City of Turin proposed to organize one technical meeting for the representatives of the various Euro-Mediterranean Cities networks and associations in order to define working strategies and objectives of the Forum.

Session: "Bilateral cooperation development among Northern and Southern Mediterranean Cities and new initiatives of the Mediterranean Region in the framework of the new MED-PACT project."

During the afternoon, **Richard WEBER**, Director of EuropeAid Cooperation Office for Europe, the South Mediterranean, the Middle East and the European Neighbourhood Policy presented the future of Mediterranean cooperation in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. He also emphasised the good results obtained by those cities that between 2003 and 2005 realized decentred cooperation programmes in the Mediterranean Region by using the funds given by the Med'Act programme (Barcelona - Bordeaux - Genoa - Rome).

Finally, **Richard WEBER** announced that the publishing of the MED-PACT programme, approved in June 2005 by the European Commission, was expected by the end of January 2006. This programme will allow the Euro-Mediterranean Cities to present new decentred cooperation projects. The presentation of twinning programmes for the interchange of experiences among experts and officers of various subjects will also be a great opportunity for the Cities.

Some representatives of the wide Lebanon delegation attending the meeting presented a project financed by the European Union (and already realized) called "*Preparation of municipal action projects in a local development planned framework*"; the project involved 12 groups of Lebanon Cities.

Adballah SAAD, Mayor of Bkassine (South Lebanon), spoke on behalf of all Lebanon Mayors attending the meeting underlining the importance of a development plan for the local authorities in order to meet stable short and long-term objectives.

Ms. **Roula KABBANI**, from the Office of the Minister for Administrative Reform (OMSAR), emphasised OSMAR role in the management of the Assistance Programme for the Rehabilitation of Lebanon Administration (ARAL) as well as the importance of the project presented in the framework of Lebanon Municipalities development policies.

Finally, **Paul CASALONGA**, Project Manager, spoke about the methodology used in order to realize the programme and about the reaching of two main results:

1. the implementation for each group of Municipalities of a simplified development plan for local authorities;
2. the writing out of 4 or 5 technical reports of the project (DTP) for each group.

At the end of the meeting, the representative of the City of Fés, **Mohamed LARAQUI HOUSSEINI**, Vice Mayor in charge of international relationships and bilateral cooperation, suggested that the next Euromed Working Group of EUROCITIES meeting has to be held in Fés in a date to be defined.

Rinaldo BONTEMPI thanked again the attendees and invited them all to the next meeting.