USUDS PROJECT

Urban Sustainable Development Strategies in the Mediterranean

Programme funded by the EU
The **USUDS Project** is an initiative by **MedCities**, a network of Mediterranean cities created in 1991. The project brought together Mediterranean cities interested in building and developing urban sustainable development strategies. The Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, acting as MedCities General Secretariat, has been the project leader.

This project, which started in October 2011 and runs until July 2014, is a continuation of the work started in the Conference on Urban Development Strategies in the Mediterranean which took place in **Barcelona** on the 14th and 15th of March, 2011. The budget of the Project was €2,863,011, co-financed by €1,783,742 from the **ENPI-CBC MED European Union programme** for cross-border cooperation in the Mediterranean. Excluding the cities involved in the project, the donors are: the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development, the Provincial Council of Barcelona, the Municipality of Barcelona and the Hariri Foundation for Sustainable Human Development.

The project’s overall objective is to promote sustainable development and social cohesion in Mediterranean Cities and it has two specific aims. The first of these is to focus on the creation of three new Urban Development Strategies in the cities of **Sousse** (Tunisia), **Saida** (Lebanon) and **Larnaka** (Cyprus). The second one is the promotion of a network of cities interested in building and implementing urban sustainable development strategies.

The creation of urban sustainable development strategies (UDS, also called City Development Strategies - CDS) in the Mediterranean region has gathered momentum in recent years because it is a powerful tool to promote growth, stability and development. UDS also reinforces decentralisation processes, and contributes to the consolidation of good practices in government. By enhancing the role of local authorities and fostering participation, Urban Development Strategies contributes to the consolidation of democratic transition processes, balancing territorial development and empowering citizens.
The urban development strategy of the city of Sousse is based on the creation of a participative diagnosis, and a shared definition of a future vision of the city. Five common strategic objectives were defined: social and territorial cohesion, economic competitiveness, territorial planning, environmental management and governance; and an action plan was created to lead up to the vision for Sousse 2030.

**Vision > Sousse 2030: an integrative, creative and attractive city.**

The strategic plan “Sousse 2030” is structured along six strategic lines:

- An inclusive and egalitarian city, with a balanced territory
- A protected heritage, and the reinforcement of cultural aspects
- A pole of attraction with sustainable and diverse tourism
- An accessible city with a well-planned and aesthetic design
- A clean city with resources which are protected and cared for
- A model of local governance with a powerful civil society

Each of those lines has around 10 projects that will transform the city of Sousse in the coming years.

During the USUDS project, the city of Sousse carried out a broad consultation and participation process with the involvement of around 250 stakeholders through 10 thematic working groups, 4 sectorial meetings and civil society consultation. The next steps include the creation of a system for fostering and monitoring the Strategy that foresees the creation of a Local Development Office and an Urban Observatory.

The USUDS Project has also promoted short-term projects to start the implementation phase. One of these is a pilot project in the city of Sousse to combat failures in education. It promotes communication between different players at city level and cooperation between public and private sectors. In addition, three technical assessments were undertaken by Associated Partners of the project on the following issues: water cycle management (Municipality of Barcelona), local economic promotion (Provincial Council of Barcelona) and management of public lighting with the Municipality of Marseille.
UDS Saida

The city of Saida has undertaken a broad process of community participation to engage local stakeholders on different levels in order to identify the vision, mission, and all components of the Urban Sustainable Development Strategy. Five key drivers are identified for the city’s sustainable development which are: diversified economy, green environment, locational advantages, rich history and cultural diversity. These five assets constitute the core links that connect the strategic objectives with the projects of the action plan, generating the following vision for the city.

Vision > Saida, and its dynamic surroundings, offer a healthy diversified economy and green environment for successive generations of residents, where they can live and prosper by capitalising on its locational advantages, rich history and cultural diversity.

The strategic plan of Saida is structured in six strategic lines:

- Improving the socio-economic conditions of residents
- Sustaining environmental health
- Connecting the city with its surroundings
- Coordination, cooperation and networking
- Lobbying with the national institutions for implementing, amending and/or developing legal frameworks
- Security and Stability

Saida action plan includes 26 strategic objectives and around 26 projects to be carried out in the coming years.

During the USUDS project, Saida mobilised a wide range of stakeholders and actors in the city at different levels and in all phases of the project using different methodologies and tools. Several entities and committees are created where there were more than 95 participants in 6 working groups, more than 200 hundred members of the consultative committee, and around 13 members in the steering committee. USUDS process also focused on the vision of the city’s youth through the campaign Let’s Imagine Saida - an initiative that involved 23 primary schools and more than 400 students in defining the city’s future. As a short-term initiative for implementation, a pilot project has been designed to preserve traditional handcrafts in the old city, and improve the socio-economic conditions of artisans.

Moreover, two technical assessments were undertaken on the following issues: the creation of a system of green and open spaces (Metropolitan Area of Barcelona) and the remodelling of the fishermen harbour (Municipality of Barcelona).

UDS Larnaca

Larnaca undertook the process to give the city diagnosis, which formed the basis for to come up with of the vision of the city’s future based on Larnaca as a Gateway City, an Energy Hub, a Tourist Destination and a City of Choice.

Vision > The Gateway to Cyprus, transforming its geographical competitive advantage to a bridge connecting Europe and Asia. The emerging Energy Hub of Eastern Mediterranean, offering a unique business environment, where research, development and innovation can flourish, encouraging employment opportunities and investing in education and state of the art technologies, in a sustainable manner. The picturesque water kissed city, with its traditional and welcoming countryside, its unique natural beauty and long history, the modern tourist destination for every season and desire. The city of choice that draws its true strength from the quality of family life, the liveliness and the creativity of its people. Larnaca. The city to live the dream.

The strategic plan of Larnaca is structured in four strategic lines:

- Larnaca’s comparative advantage in order to develop a local economy related to logistic activities.
- Larnaca’s comparative advantage in order to attract energy related activities and to develop a local economy related to the energy sector.
- Larnaca’s comparative advantages for the development of a sustainable touristic product.
- Larnaca as a ‘city of choice’ to live and work, within an environment of equal opportunities, safety, and sustainable development.

As part of the action plan that will lead to this vision, Larnaca has identified 4 strategic objectives, 37 strategic actions and 95 strategic projects which it aims to implement in short, medium and long term, by the period 2040. The feasibility of these strategic projects will be assessed using relevant economic studies in the near future.

The USUDS Project has been also an opportunity to engage the local actors in the process of designing the future strategy, through the creation of five working groups and the organisation of various workshops in order to generate knowledge on key aspects of the city.

Finally, research was carried out on the image and the self-image of the city in order to identify the elements of the city that would help to promote Larnaca as a destination for visitors, investors and talents. This process of place branding was reinforced by a campaign targeting its citizens, through a video film on the vision of Larnaca.
Objective 2: The creation of a network of cities interested in developing and implementing urban development strategies in the Mediterranean

The USUDS Project has served to create a network of cities interested in developing and implementing urban development strategies that will continue beyond the Project’s scope. This network is based on the establishment of three Knowledge Transfer Centres (KTCs) and the creation of the USUDS platform www.usuds.org.

Knowledge Transfer Centres (KTCs)

The USUDS Project has established three Knowledge Transfer Centres based in the cities of Málaga (Spain), Al Fayhaa (Lebanon) and Sfax (Tunisia). These three cities developed their UDS in the past and have a strong background in strategic planning in the Mediterranean.

Their mission is to spread and promote city strategic thinking in the region and to support the implementation processes through the identification of best practices in urban development. This will allow other cities to learn from their experience through P2P sharing and the implementation of technical assistance missions and seminars. Several missions were undertaken in Tunisia and Lebanon by the KTCs in order to promote strategic planning and to help creating a network of cities in the region.

In addition, 5 dissemination and methodological seminars were undertaken during the development of the project. These were organised by the three KTCs in order to spread the concept of strategic planning and advances in the identification of the methodological challenges when designing sustainable urban strategies in the Mediterranean. Around 50 different cities participated in these methodological meetings.

The work of the three KTCs is essential for the implementation and development of a cities network and its consolidation in the future.

The KTC of Sfax has worked on the spreading and increasing awareness of strategic urban planning in the Maghreb and the identification of best practices on Urban Development.

The KTC of Al Fayhaa has worked on the spreading and increasing awareness of strategic urban planning in the Mashreq and the identification of best practices on Urban Development.

The KTC of Málaga, based at the CIEDES Foundation, has led the debates on methodological issues and coordinated with the other KTCs the best practices identification process.
The Metropolitan Area of Barcelona was in charge of creating an IT Platform dedicated to P2P learning and spreading of city strategic thinking which was one of the most relevant outcomes of the USUDS project.

The objectives of this Platform are:

- To promote collaborative learning between network members.
- To provide an effective tool for sharing experiences.
- To facilitate the work of the various decentralized Knowledge Transfer Centres and identify best practices.
- To serve as a database for each city’s future projects and to contribute to their implementation.
- To ensure the maintenance and updating of the information resource centre.
- To provide information about different initiatives related to urban strategic planning in the Mediterranean region.

The Platform is the central point for communication between network’s partners. The supply of content is decentralised so different network focal points participate in the management of the platform.

It is a multifunctional space to share information, carry out training sessions, participate in debates, and create working groups in an intranet network. It allows interaction between different kinds of parties (politicians, experts, officials, etc.) and the sharing of best practices.

The lessons learned during the USUDS project will play an active role in the promotion of networking and knowledge transfer between cities. In this sense, the expansion of the database of best practices and cases of interest is another of the USUDS challenges in the medium term.

Beyond the USUDS project:
MedCities commitment to Urban Development Strategies

During the last decade, urban development strategies have acquired relevance in the Mediterranean region. The USUDS project is a continuation of the work done in the Conference on Urban Development Strategies in the Mediterranean held in March 2011 in Barcelona.

In July 2014, the USUDS Project ends after 32 months of hard work among its partners. However, this is not the end of MedCities’ commitment of with urban strategic planning. On the contrary, USUDS is becoming a strategic working line in MedCities that will continue to strengthen and promote sustainable urban development strategies in the Mediterranean zone. This was the mandate of the General Assembly of MedCities held in Barcelona on November 2013.

In the short-term, USUDS aims to consolidate the Knowledge Transfer Centres and the USUDS Platform and to increase the number of cities and experts interested in urban strategic planning in the Mediterranean.

Taking into consideration the increasing interest in urban strategies, new methodologies will need to be developed to respond to the new challenges cities are facing when planning their future. The challenges of the 21st century mean that cities must develop strategies in a context of uncertainty. The USUDS project has been paradigmatic in that sense. The three cities developing their UDS have faced major external challenges (a financial crisis a post-revolutionary context and regional instability). However, despite that, they have been able to produce high-quality UDS that will contribute to the future development of these cities.

Their main challenge will now be implementation. This requires complex work on defining and creating necessary alliances, both inside and outside the city. This is needed to put projects in to action and to source funding and, to that end, the partnership of public and private sectors is a vital tool. In addition, the provision of technical assistance at the beginning of the implementation phase is very important and MedCities has already started working on that issue with some of its members.

MedCities will continue to endeavour to implement urban projects in its members, creating a real contribution to the development of Mediterranean towns, which is vital for the future and stability of the entire region.
The 2007-2013 ENPI CBC Mediterranena Sea Basin Programme is a multilateral cross-border cooperation initiative funded by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). The Programme objective is to promote the sustainable and harmonious cooperation process at the Mediterranean Basin level by dealing with the common challenges and enhancing its endogenous potential. It finances cooperation projects as a contribution to economic, social, environmental and cultural development of the Mediterranean region. The following 14 countries participate in the Programme: Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Palestinian Authority, Portugal, Spain, Syria, Tunisia. The Joint Management Authority (JMA) is the Autonomous Region of Sardinia (Italy). Official Programme languages are Arabic, English and French.