

THE MALTA CALL



FOR A EURO-MEDITERRANEAN NETWORK OF LIVING LABS

Structuring a knowledge-based and innovation-friendly environment across the Euro-Mediterranean region has become an urgent and widely acknowledged necessity.

On the one hand, technological clusters and knowledge-based communities are emerging and transforming a range of areas into innovation-led ecosystems. In several other places, meanwhile, as shown by recent UNDP reports, innovation is still hampered by insufficient R&D investment as well as a lack of interaction between educational systems and businesses – even though most Mediterranean countries do possess the ability and the resources needed for a knowledge-based economy.

Answering the UNDP's request and the expectations of the European Commission as well as the European Living Labs network, the Territories of Tomorrow Foundation is ready to take an active part in this structuration process. As announced at the recent EBN congress in Fez, Morocco¹, we propose to create a Euro-Mediterranean network of Living Labs. We are inviting all those involved in the advancement of a knowledge-based economy to join this initiative. We are calling local and national authorities to support it as a way to contribute to the Union for the Mediterranean ambition.

Examples abound, in the Mediterranean's brilliant history, of how integrated economies and societies can thrive thanks to innovation and intense knowledge circulation. Now is the time to follow again this path to prosperity.

Living Labs offer a relevant framework to answer today's challenges based on the following key principles:

1. To insist on important, though sometimes underestimated aspects of projects such as the economic, social and cultural background; the necessity to create strong training facilities (physical or virtual); the full involvement of all users, end users not being the least of them.
2. To reshape economic development strategies not only based on the wide use of technological tools but also by integrating, in the most concrete and complete way, sustainability issues and values and leveraging the human resources and potential of each territory.
3. To develop the attractiveness of each area or territory as a part of integrated, thematic networks.
4. To have researchers and innovative players collaborate with businesses – including small ones – from such traditional fields as agriculture, fishing, retail, tourism, the port industry and others. A valuable expertise could thus be developed and contribute to an in-depth and well-balanced modernisation of areas in Lebanon, Palestine, Morocco, Jordan, Tunisia and others countries.
5. To fully leverage a territory's existing or developing resources by building knowledge maps, clustering its business and research activities and studying the needs and capacities of all its players.

The Territories of Tomorrow Foundation provides its assistance to projects which aim at creating or developing knowledge maps and expertise centres for a knowledge-based economy. To date, five French local territories have joined the Foundation's Living Lab to host innovation-led projects. The Foundation is also participating to several initiatives in the fields of e-medicine, e-learning, sustainable development in the Euro-Mediterranean region, in tight cooperation with the European Union and its subordinated organisations or networks.

For more information, please visit our website www.territories-of-tomorrow.org



¹ 18th edition of the 2009 annual congress of the European Business and Innovation Centres Network: “*In search of Creative Ideas, Smart Solutions and Pragmatic Tools*”, June 24-27, 2009.