Executive summary

Confidence in the Mediterranean digital society:
Steps towards a Med. area

Computerization is transforming contemporary societies and economies with the same kind of impact as the industrial revolution. The development of the "digital" world (the term most often used to describe the computerization process) is too significant to be strategically led and governed at national level alone. It requires a general Euro-Mediterranean policy aimed at creating a digital common area, a "Mediterranean society of information and knowledge", linchpin of a general policy fostering economic growth and the onset of a "knowledge society".

Recommendations made by the report

To implement this policy, the report puts forward the following recommendations:

1) Create a "*Mediterranean cloud computing"* in the general interest, constituting a shared digital area between countries in the Mediterranean basin, which we have named a ".med area". Three fields are crucial to developing this Mediterranean Cloud:
- Renewable energy, especially solar
- Electronic payment
- Network security.

2) Define a user and reference charter and a Mediterranean ICT label, encouraging standard practices.

3) Reflection and public debate on potential policies to protect intellectual property, privacy and sovereignty.

4) Create a Mediterranean investment fund *MEDTIC* (public-private partnership) devoted to ICT.

5) Give impetus to industrial production of content, particularly software, in the South. This would help to stem the brain drain, relocate business to its country of origin and could encourage nationals to return from Silicon Valley.

6) Develop teaching and research in the ICT field in South Mediterranean countries, as well as the associated incubators and start-ups, especially for young engineers. Several measures foster research, education and innovation, e.g. the creation of:

- A network of technical clusters on research, innovation and development
- A Mediterranean observatory of intangible material and data.
- A University of the Mediterranean, both virtual and networked.

7) One of the major projects to support content development is the digitalization and archiving of the Mediterranean's cultural and historical heritage. A Mediterranean WebTV would be an ideal showcase to promote this cultural wealth, particularly for the tourist sector. Each year, a founding and federating cultural, scientific and educational event would gather Mediterranean key players, especially young people, by promoting an ICT project or innovative and original initiatives.

CONSTRUIRE LA MÉDITERRANÉE

Vers un espace .med
La confiance dans la société numérique méditerranéenne

RAPPORT DU GROUPE D'EXPERTS TIC IPEMED

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Choosing between "desirable" and "doable"

These main recommendations, which make up a general policy, can be split into the "desirable" and the "doable". The Mediterranean region is currently both very near to and very far from this kind of comprehensive policy. Very near, because civil society is highly active in the ICT domain, particularly software and social networks. Very far, because developers in the South, in particular the young, tend to leave the country as soon as they can ("brain drain"), setting off to "conquer the West"; because public authorities lag behind operators and innovators; and because the ICT sector is strategic and thus highly sensitive for security raisons (control of networks and information systems), while the main operators are western.

Among the lines of recommendation put forward, the strongest lever, i.e. creating a "Mediterranean Cloud" is not the easiest short-term goal since it calls for cooperation between diverse operators acting in fierce competition. It would therefore be a good idea to launch a Euromed conference on the subject to encourage cooperation.

The easiest to accomplish would be to define a user and reference charter and a Mediterranean label on ICTs. This would also have the advantage of gathering regulators, private operators and civil society figureheads around ICT issues.

Similarly, a MEDTIC investment fund could be rapidly set up, as well as reinforced action to boost education and research between Europe and the South Mediterranean. Specialized clusters could be launched to work on developing audiovisual content and software, encouraging skills and creativity, and retaining (or attracting back) talented emigration candidates.

Lastly, halfway between desirable and doable, accelerating and intensifying the digitalization of Mediterranean cultural funds could spark off a policy in this domain. This large-scale operation would contribute to preserving and promoting an immense heritage and have economic impact through supporting the transformation of Mediterranean tourism. For example, alongside investments made by the MEDTIC fund, why not involve major tourist operators in this technical and financial effort via tax support measures, along the lines of a Mediterranean "heritage tax credit"? This kind of operation could be popularized through festive and cultural events.