

***RehabiMed*. Heritage protection and sustainable development in the Mediterranean**

RehabiMed is a project in the context of the EU's Euromed Heritage Programme. The objective of this project is to promote rehabilitation in Mediterranean countries as a factor of sustainable development. The aim is to preserve the rich heritage of traditional architecture, a key component of Mediterranean culture and landscape, and to improve the living conditions of a broad cross section of the population, increase social cohesion and contribute to economic development. The project was set up in 2004 with EU funding of 2,743,501 euros.

The project is organized in three stages: the creation of a method, the training of actors to carry it out, and its implementation in the form of four pilot operations. 15 countries are involved in the project (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, Italy, France and Spain), involving the contributions of over 150 experts, participation in training programmes and four pilot operations.

Rehabimed pilot operations: a challenge for the future

RehabiMed has set up a regional participatory rehabilitation laboratory that is carrying out four pilot operations on the theme of four essential aspects of rehabilitation. The rehabilitation actions involved in the pilot operations are varied and all chosen with regard to the specific problems of each place, but they are applicable to similar situations throughout the Mediterranean area.

The operations are being carried out in the Medina of Marrakech (Morocco), where work is being carried out to rehabilitate various dwellings in very precarious conditions in order to demonstrate the social side of rehabilitation; in Kairouan (Tunisia), where the aim is sustainable tourism in a World Heritage town to reconcile the life of the inhabitants with tourism and use rehabilitation as a way to turn this symbiosis into a factor of development rather than destruction; in Lefkara (Cyprus), to develop the possibilities presented by rehabilitation to improve the urban landscape, and in Cairo (Egypt), where RehabiMed has chosen a *wekala* as a work centre for artisans of different trades to show that rehabilitation can do a great deal to improve their working conditions and environment and increase their output.

A *wekala* for artisans: Cairo

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| PILOT OPERATION | Rehabilitation of El-Magraby <i>wekala</i> |
| LOCATION: | Cairo |
| COLLABORATING BODIES | Centre Culturel d’Egypte in Paris and the Antiquities Authority |
| INVESTMENT | 150,000 euros |
| PROJECT DATES: | March 2007 – July 2007 |

The megalopolis of Cairo contains hidden behind its walls a very valuable old town with a whole variety of buildings for commercial uses and housing. Over-occupation and a long period of abandonment have turned this part of the city into a dirty grey place in a lamentable state of degradation. In recent decades, the cultural authorities have restored a good number of buildings of great monumental value, highlighting certain emblematic points in the city. These monuments have become isolated amid an urban environment of poverty and degradation.

A very valuable and widespread building type throughout Islamic Cairo is the *wekala*, a construction that houses artisans, traders and dwellings in a city of feverish economic activity. For its pilot project, RehabiMed has chosen the 18th-century El-Magraby *wekala*, situated in the district of Gamalia. The working conditions of the artisans who currently occupy it are precarious due to the poor state of the building and its installations as a result of the lack of maintenance for many years.

The aim of rehabilitation work is to offer a decent workspace for the many artisans now accommodated in the building, improving their working conditions and their output. Not only are there major deficiencies in the building itself, but also the machinery, tools and services require attention. This scheme will serve to show the real possibilities and effectiveness of undertaking micro-projects to improve the day-to-day lives of its population, at the same time recovering local architectural heritage.

RehabiMed considers that the pilot operations show the complexity of both the context and the operators, as well as reflecting the problems faced by many other places in the Mediterranean. The method created by RehabiMed and the flexibility of its application are producing results that are both effective and respectful of the environment. These pilot operations will serve as models to be applied throughout the Mediterranean basin.

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