



## **Manifesto**

### **Towards a common strategy for innovation focused in the light industries of the Mediterranean islands**

#### **Common issues**

Taking into account the diversity of the economic situations present, we agree to recognize common issues that contribute to the difficulties faced by our insular economies.

To a general extent, island economies lack a strong industrial base. This often results from the convergence of several factors:

- limited natural resources (water, energy, raw materials),
- the restricted scale of insular markets, whose narrowness makes consolidation difficult,
- persistent problems related to transportation and communication infrastructures,
- the additional cost of transportation for both import and export,
- their peripheral position in the European single market,
- the lack of a qualified workforce.

Moreover, metropolisation processes have prevented the islands from building up their economies.

Consequently, we share the common concern of overcoming these structural weaknesses. By mobilising our efforts, we aim to contribute to the challenge of diversification of insular economic ecosystems, by taking advantage of possibilities offered by transnational cooperation.

#### **Shared vision**

Our common objective is to develop the competitiveness of island economies by overcoming insular fragilities. Consequently, we look for ways to strengthen the light industrial base in the main sectors of insular activities, focusing on the interaction between innovation and niche markets, generally overlooked by the larger industrial enterprises. We thus concentrate our action on these emerging needs and opportunities, considering them as propitious to innovation and economic diversification<sup>1</sup>.

We encourage sustainable activities that respond to both specific needs of the main island activities – tourism, agriculture, food-processing, and construction – and trends such as eco-friendly lifestyles).

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<sup>1</sup> Cf the Long Tail Analysis



Starting from the SMILIES partnership, our collaboration brings together experts from several insular regions and different sectors into a single network. This network offers its expertise and support to light industry entrepreneurs, to help them identify and develop the tools and products (new materials, product and process design, business planning, marketing strategies, etc.) to position themselves and perform in promising niche markets.

At the transnational level, we aim to contribute to regional innovation policies by calling on policy makers to take insular specificities into account .

### **A common strategy to enhance innovation capacities in insular light industries**

We have formed the SMILIES partnership in order to achieve the following objectives:

- Develop networks and synergies between key actors at the local, regional and transnational levels, improving and monitoring the impact of light industry in island development.
- Define and promote the adoption of industrial innovation policies and integrated actions, generating new models of development and economic diversification for Med islands.
- Address the obstacles of insularity by building partnerships with remote global innovation actors, enhancing local innovation capacities through the Trans-local Innovation Systems approach.
- Complement technological innovation with social and organisational innovation.

We specifically wish to address the following innovation challenges:

- A need for innovation culture in product design, materials, processes
- The need to increase the responsiveness of local industrial ecosystems in order to counterbalance the forces of global externalisation.
- The opportunities offered by alternative systems of marketing and distribution system, encouraging experimentation in (short) supply chains.
- A potential of adoption of innovativeoften technology or Web 2.0 based business models appropriate for Med island economic systems.

We propose innovation paths, which can be explored singly or in combination, in order to:

- Promote innovation culture in product design, materials and processes.
- Exploit the competitive advantage of cultural diversity and specificity.
- Focus on the opportunities offered by the “green and smart” economy in terms of skills, decentralisation, and attractiveness of island locations..
- Explore the role of the public sector in developing innovative marketing and distribution systems.
- Promote the adoption of networking practice and platforms among micro-businesses and SMEs.