

## PRESENTATION OF THE MEDIMONT PROJECT ON DESERTIFICATION AND THE MEDITERRANEAN MOUNTAINS

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Mountainous areas are characterised by a delicate balance between ecosystems productivity and human use of natural resource. Many critical developments can be observed all over the world which endanger this delicate balance (B.A.H.C., 1994).

This is particularly true in many mountain regions of the developing countries like the Himalayas, the Andes or the African ranges, where the growing demographic pressure initiates vicious circles of degradation. Serious problems concern also mountain areas in developed countries. Deforestation, wildfires, erosion, agriculture decline, air pollution, massive tourism, traffic, etc. are but a few examples which affect soil, vegetation, water and other vital resource of mountainous areas in a critical way.

Everywhere, mountain environments are also among the most sensitive to a possible climate change.

The Mediterranean area is a good example of such critical developments. In the North and the South anthropogenic activity is responsible for massive degradation. Maintaining the capacity of mountains as water towers and primary water sources is for instance a major concern to avoid further reduction of water availability, which is a threat to many countries (MARGAT J., 1992). Thus, addressing the role of mountainous areas in the desertification process around the Mediterranean basin is a key issue for this region.

The study of desertification phenomena requires the combination of various sources of information at different time and space scale-levels (DUBOST M., 1994).

MEDIMONT is an example of such studies. Coordinated by ICALPE and selected for support by the EC DG XII, it assembles many teams from Spain, France, Italy and Greece.

It is a multidisciplinary research and development programme on the role and the place of the mountains in the desertification process of the Mediterranean regions.

The main objectives are to understand the desertification process in the Mediterranean mountains, under various natural and human conditions, and deliver guidelines for a rational management of such areas, including prevention, monitoring and appropriate policies for sustainable development.

The project is a combination of local-scale and regional-scale investigations.

Regional-scale approaches consist in a series of parallel investigations ranging from sensitivity studies to climate change, through the use of remote sensing techniques and macro-economic scenarios, to historical botanical reviews.

At the local-scale, a series of case studies is carried out in pilot-zones in Greece, Italy, France, Spain, in order to study the phenomenon, identify criteria, develop guidelines at a local-scale, but also give evidence of the diversity, the similarities and dissimilarities among the study areas.

Mountainous pilot-zones have been selected in five Mediterranean regions undergoing a severe desertification process, in Andalusia, Corsica, Basilicate, Calabria, and Crete (Fig. 1).

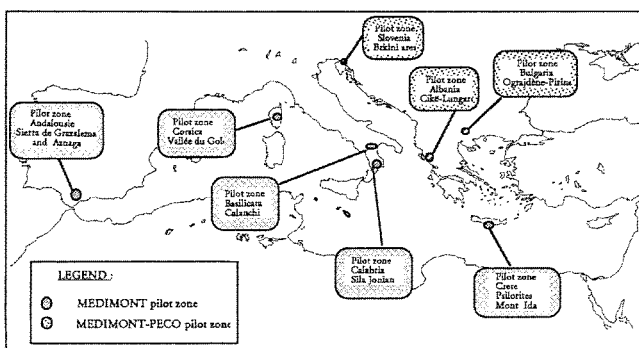


Fig. 1. Map of pilot zones of the MEDIMONT Project and its extension to the Eastern Europe countries (MEDIMONT PECO).

Studies carried out in insular conditions within the MEDIMONT project, in Corsica and Crete, are presented in this meeting.

### REFERENCES

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