

COOPERATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN. LESSONS FROM THE CULTURAL SECTOR

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1. Introduction

The verb «to cooperate» finds its roots in the late Latin verb «cooperari», composed in turn by the prefix «co-» meaning «together, jointly» and the noun «operari» meaning, literally, «to do». The verb, widely used today in both spoken and written language, therefore means «to work together for a common purpose»¹ and «to associate with another or others for mutual benefit»² with the understanding that between the parties involved there is a shared vision of the aim to be achieved and the intention to actively pursue it³.

The noun «cooperation» has the same meaning and, as regards cooperation towards development, it is defined as «an activity undertaken by various governments to support the economic and cultural growth of developing countries»⁴: it is striking to see how the role of culture is here understood as being substantive in fostering the development of societies and, although the above definition refers strictly to actions undertaken by governments, it is fair enough to say that it can also be readily extended to other operators such, as for instance, private organizations working with the same aim.

Interarts⁵ is a civil society organization (CSO) with an experience of over twenty years in cooperation as well as in cooperation towards development. It has always worked from a cultural perspective and has acquired extensive experience in designing and implementing complex projects with both public funding and multiple partnerships. In its mission statement, it is stated that the organization «strives to include a cultural approach in projects concerning human development». It has, since its foundation in 1995, designed and developed cultural cooperation projects with an international remit. Although it has mainly focused its work in Europe and Latin America, it has recently begun to

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