

Preparatory document for the elaboration of the CSO-LRA¹ thematic programme

PLATFORMA position

PLATFORMA would like to welcome the work of the European Commission and the reflection that led to the elaboration of the thematic programme. The preparatory document shows that the dialogue started some years ago with local and regional governments (LRGs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) was fruitful, and we believe the logic that prevailed in the elaboration of the programme should allow for the implementation of efficient projects, with a strong impact, for both CSOs and LRGs in partner countries.

Putting the emphasise on capacity building, encouraging CSO-LA partnerships throughout the programme, supporting CSOs in order to favour transparency and public participation, supporting the participation of LRA networks in political dialogue at national, regional and world level, implementing pilot projects in terms of territorial approach are all elements that we have encouraged over the past years and that are now cornerstones of the programme.

We note that the European Commission better assess the constraints that LRGs in partner countries still need to face. This represents a substantive step forward in the process which will lead to the strengthening of their capacities.

In the spirit of partnership and in order to contribute to further improve some aspects of the programme, we would like to make the following observations.

The role of the different local and regional government levels

As a network representing all the levels of government, we would like to see the scope of the programme explicitly extended to the higher levels of local and regional government, and not restricted to municipal level. We request that all levels of sub national governments be able to benefit from the opportunities offered under the programme in a similar fashion.

The contrary would be very surprising, the more so that the programme has a strategic objective on the territorial approach to development, and that the involvement of a higher than municipal level would be favoured in this framework.

Moreover we recall that regions, both from in Europe and in partner countries, constitute a fundamental part of the multilevel governance model.

In Europe regions have been involved in development cooperation for many years: from an economic point of view – as donors – and from a technical point of view – in the capitalisation of best practices on decentralisation.

¹ We use in this document, including in the extracts reproduced from the document of the European Commission, a different terminology than the one used by the European institutions. Indeed we recommend the systematic use of the wording “local **and regional authorities**” or “**local and regional governments**”.

In partner countries regions play a major and growing role with regards to the two pillars defined in the “Agenda for change”: human rights, democracy and democratic governance, and inclusive and sustainable growth.

The geographical coverage of the programme

We support the geographical coverage of the programme; given the fact that inequality persists in intermediate revenue countries which will no longer benefit from bilateral cooperation from 2014, we believe it is important that the EU maintains its support to local and regional governments and to civil society organisations in these countries.

We hope that in these countries the restructuration of the EU Delegation teams will not prevent the implementation of the thematic programmes.

Finally we would like to stress that special attention needs to be given to supporting LRGs and decentralised public administration in both fragile states and in small states, especially small island states.

Priority 1: Focus on country level: enhancing CSOs' and LRGs' contributions to governance and development processes

We are convinced that the elaboration of the roadmap for cooperation with CSOs will be an efficient tool to structure the commitment of the EU with the CSOs.

We ask the European Commission to seriously consider the possibility of elaborating a similar tool for local and regional governments. This process would be justified given the fact that infra-national governments are very diverse in nature. This government level gathers public authorities of all sizes, with very different competences, and consequently with very specific missions and challenges. A commitment worthy of the challenge that is the reinforcement of LRGs in partner countries needs a strategic approach and an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for each country. We could even envisage the elaboration of a joint roadmap for civil society and local and regional governments.

We propose to underline that CSOs must function in complete transparency, this being an essential principle for public authorities as well as for the other societal actors.

Finally we recall that EU support mechanisms should be implemented in synergy with support mechanisms implemented by other donors, such as multilateral organisations.

Strategic objective 1.1.b: CSO actions to enhance social development

We would like to see the document underline a bit further the need for CSOs to work in close partnership with LRGs, even in the most difficult contexts.

We propose to amend the text as follows:

Paragraph 3: As a general rule, the implementation of this component of the programme will require strong **partnership** between CSOs and public authorities to prevent duplication, overlap and parallel systems, as well as ineffective and unsustainable interventions. All initiatives carried forward by CSOs should take place in an “institution – building” logic, and **in close cooperation with public LRG**. It is encouraged that supported initiatives include community mobilization and capacity development, **including for LRG**, in order to enable the targeted population to acquire increased understanding and ability to influence the underlying causes of the challenges they face in accessing services. The aim is to favour and stimulate a demand for social services by population to

which public authorities should, in the long run, be able to respond, reinforcing their 'downward accountability' towards their citizens.

We would like to underline the role that local authorities can play in social service delivery in fragile states. In these very peculiar and difficult contexts, we support strong partnerships between CSOs and LRGs, which in the long term must lead to the LRGs taking over service delivery.

Strategic objective 1.2: Enhance LRGs' contributions to governance and development processes

We would like to recall that local and regional governments, wherever democratically elected, participate in strengthening democracy and the rule of law. It is important to underline this fundamental aspect, which is mentioned only once in the document.

We would also like to see mentioned here that, by linking citizens to central governments, LRGs contribute to the appropriation of national development policies, as recognised in the Busan outcome document.

Strategic objective 1.2.b: Strengthening the capacity of LRGs to effectively deliver public services, including social services, and to promote inclusive and sustainable growth at local level

The role of national associations is crucial in strengthening the capacity of local authorities, but also in organising the dialogue between infra-national and central governments as well as with the EU Delegations and other national and international partners. We welcome the new place the programme seems to give them.

We are pleased to see that the European Commission will continue to support cooperation initiatives carried out by European LRAs and their associations, and to see that decentralised cooperation is envisaged as a means for capacity building of LRAs in partner countries.

We would like to recall that national associations of local and regional governments in Europe also have the necessary expertise to play an important role in reinforcing LRGs and national associations in partner countries.

Finally, the regional LRG networks in partner countries, in partnership with PLATFORMA and the world networks, can cooperate with the European Commission in order to establish a working framework that would allow to identify the needs of LRGs in partner countries and the support that European actors can bring in response to these needs. This framework would favour the pooling of resources and coordination.

Strategic objective 1.3: a territorial approach to promote local development and social cohesion

PLATFORMA supports the establishment of this objective, which represents an important innovation as compared to the former programme. However, we would like to recall that the right of initiative and the leadership role of LRAs in the implementation of the territorial approach is essential and deserves to be mentioned in the document.

We welcome the perspective of joint work between national and local/regional authorities, essential in order to articulate national policies and local needs. However, the leadership role of LRAs in this task should also be mentioned.

Finally, we would like to suggest that the territorial partnerships could be implemented in collaboration with certain pilot territories from Europe and using shared or delegated funds management

mechanisms. European LRGs could be awarded the management of funds following the elaboration of framework contracts. This process would objectify the potential embedded in multi level governance model. It would also strengthen networking between actors created through territorial partnership, and would reinforce the coherence between the actions undertaken on the territories of partner countries.

Priority 2: Reinforcing regional and global CSO and LRG networks

The European Commission supports local and regional government networks and their coordination efforts at regional and world level, and we can but congratulate this. These networks provide a unique link between the local populations and the debates taking place within regional and international institutions. However, we would like to underline the capacity building needs of most of these networks.

Thus we invite the Commission to assess the most appropriate support options, whether for regional networks (European networks included) or global networks.

Finally, we would like to see the European Commission support the efforts made by the global networks in order to reinforce the participation of local and regional governments in the follow-up of the Rio + 20 and the post-MDGs framework. Moreover, as these two processes are the priorities at international level, we would like to underline the importance for the thematic programme to be implemented with these processes in mind.

We suggest the following amendments:

Paragraph 2: With a view to enhance CSOs' and LRGs' contributions to policy development and thinking, including with regard to the (Post-) MDG framework, this priority intends to strengthen transnational **and global** alliances as well as initiatives for dialogue, exchange, networking and dissemination of good practices. The programme will particularly consider the role of CSO and LRG networks in relation to policy debates at the European **and global** level, promoting structured dialogues between CSO and LA networks and among them, the EU and other institutions and where needed linking to the Policy Coherence for Development agenda.

Paragraph 3: Special attention will be paid at European **and global** level.

Last paragraph: The programme will also seek to strengthen European **and partner countries** CSO and GLR networks, including their capacity to build transnational alliances, to coordinate and collaborate, and to actively contribute to EU development policy processes.

Priority 3: Development Education and Awareness Raising initiatives

The economic crisis that Europe is now experiencing may be the source of a withdrawal of our continent, endangering the commitment of Member States for development assistance.

From this point of view, initiatives aiming at the public should go beyond mere awareness raising so as to encompass those more ambitious objectives that development education activities underlie. It seems indeed vital that the European Commission' support to development education allows for stronger awareness among European citizens, beyond educational systems.

Moreover, by allowing citizens to develop critical thinking skills in relation to development and world interdependences, DEAR can contribute to the improvement of the relevance and the legitimacy of national and sub national development policies.

Finally considering that the European Commission recognises the added value of associations of local authorities (ALA), we recommend to include them explicitly in the list of groups whose initiatives in the field of development education and awareness raising can benefit from support.

We suggest the following amendment:

Paragraph 2; As an integral component of this Programme, the EU DEAR strategy will aim to support initiatives promoted by different types of international, national and local public institutions, academia, research centres, non for profit media and civil society organisations, associations of local authorities and networks of ALA.