

The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa: How will local and regional governments benefit from it?

PLATFORMA position

PLATFORMA – the network of local and regional governments for development cooperation between Europe and partner countries- calls on the European Union and its Member States to adopt the following recommendations in view of the rolling out of the activities of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa and the upcoming report by the European Parliament on the matter.

Key messages

- Enshrine local ownership in statutes to ensure effective implementation of the objectives;
- The European Parliament must be given the power to monitor the implementation of projects funded by the Trust Fund;
- Integrate decentralised cooperation as a modality in the Trust Fund;
- The Trust Fund must not use development cooperation sources to carry out security-related projects;

Narrative

➤ **Enshrine local ownership in statutes to ensure effective implementation of the objectives**

The Trust Fund's declared objective of ensuring local ownership by consulting with local authorities on the priorities and projects submitted is a positive element. However, a number of questions still need to be clarified regarding this involvement. Will this consultation be done on an ad hoc basis or will it be formalised in the Trust Fund's statutes? Will local authorities have access to the meetings of the Strategic Board and Operational Committee? Will this consultation be limited to the design phase or will it extend to the project's implementation? In PLATFORMA's view, local and regional authorities (LRGs), through their national associations, must have a seat in the operational committees of the respective target countries to take effective part in the discussions throughout the programme cycle.

LRG's actions are relevant to three of the four objectives of the Trust Fund, as reflected in the Strategic Orientation document:

- Greater economic and employment opportunities (Objective 1)

Economic development has a strong local dimension because of the weight SMEs have in a number of third countries as important contributors to economic activity and employment. Local authorities' policies towards local businesses can play a significant leverage role for a more favourable

investment environment, especially if the following preconditions are in place: security of property and predictability, coherent territorial and land planning, transparency and accountability of administrations, fiscal and administrative decentralisation, local procurement policies, and access to local markets. Therefore, the Trust Fund must have support to SMEs in partner countries as one of its priorities.

- Strengthening the resilience of communities and in particular the most vulnerable as well as refugees and displaced people (Objective 2)

LRGs are key in reducing the vulnerability of crisis-affected populations and promoting their self-reliance, by improving the delivery of services such as education and health, upgrading slums and deprived urban areas, and designing participatory and integrated urban strategies. Regrettably, the Strategic Orientation document makes scarce reference to the environmental dimension of resilience. In view of achieving this objective, the Trust Fund also needs to support projects at the local level to promote adaptation to climate change and the mitigation of its effects, an important cause of displacement in the continent. This is an area where European LRGs, whose commitment to climate change action has been demonstrated in initiatives such as the Covenant of Mayors or Mayors Adapt, can provide valuable guidance to LRGs in partner countries.

- Improved governance and conflict prevention and reduced displacement and irregular migration (Objective 4)

Unfortunately, the Strategic Orientation document makes no mention of decentralisation. Supporting projects which promote decentralisation must be, in PLATFORMA's opinion, a priority when addressing the root causes of migration in Africa. An efficient decentralisation framework, with clear core powers and responsibilities and transfer of corresponding financial resources ensures that local and regional governments can carry out their responsibilities, among which the reception of refugees, and deliver the basic services effectively and efficiently. Such a framework is also an important precondition for LRGs to be able to promote the self-reliance of refugees and their integration into the host communities. Furthermore, decentralisation can also help political leaders in the fight against corruption, by improving the government's capacity to deliver services while increasing the transparency and the accountability to local constituents.

- **The European Parliament must be given the power to monitor the implementation of the funded projects**

The implementation of Trust Fund activities needs to be done in the most transparent manner. So far, the process leading to its establishment has been dominated by the Council and the Commission, without any major involvement of the European Parliament, local and regional governments, or civil society. Given its democratic legitimacy, it is essential for the Parliament to be involved as much as possible in the latter's supervision. This can be done, for instance, via regular reporting by the European Commission to the Committee on Development. Moreover, information on the projects funded by the Trust Fund should be made available to the wider public, including local and regional governments, civil society organisation and other stakeholders.

- **Integrate decentralised cooperation as a modality in the Trust Fund**

Funding city to city or region to region partnerships can help achieve the objectives of the Trust Fund. European LRGs can provide valuable assistance to LRGs in the targeted African countries when addressing the triple challenge of creating employment, building resilience, and improving governance. Hence, the Trust Fund must have decentralised cooperation as a means for implementation of its programmes.

These partnerships have a positive impact on democratic governance, and social cohesion at local level, which, as previously said, contributes to creating the appropriate conditions for peace and security. In

addition to this, city-to-city / region-to-region cooperation ensure ownership of local governments and local populations of the programmes implemented in their territories, which is one of the main goals of the Trust Fund.

➤ **The Trust Fund must not use development cooperation sources to carry out security-related projects**

The Trust Fund must not use funds from the European Development Fund or other Official Development Assistance (ODA) sources, earmarked for development cooperation, for projects pursuing security objectives, such as capacity-building in the field of border management and control. This misuse of development cooperation would set a dangerous precedent for the future European development aid, already undermined by Member States' unwillingness to fulfil the target of devoting 0,7% of their GDP to ODA.

With regards to the security-related projects funded under the Trust Fund's objective of improved migration management, these must always be in line with Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development in order to ensure they are not incompatible with the efforts made via development cooperation in the frame of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Background

Local and regional governments (LRGs) are key actors for development, democratic governance as well as peace and security. They have been increasingly recognized by both the European Union^{1 2} and the United Nations³ as major development actors -thousands of European towns and regions are already implementing projects in cooperation with towns and regions in partner countries. This Trust Fund could be an opportunity to strengthen the EU's partnership with local and regional authorities in both EU Member States and the target partner countries.

The Emergency Trust Fund for Africa was formally established at the Valetta Summit on Migration in November 2015 with the objective to address the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, by promoting socioeconomic development and security in the countries of origin. Its objectives are fully in line with the principles reflected in the European Agenda on Migration, published by the European Commission in May 2015. According to the European Commission, the advantages of the Trust Fund include its greater flexibility and capacity to respond quickly to crises.

PLATFORMA is the network of local and regional governments (LRGs), and their associations, active in the field of development cooperation between Europe and partner countries. PLATFORMA has 34 members: national, European and international associations, as well individual local and regional governments. The Secretariat is hosted by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (more information on www.platforma-dev.eu).

Since its launch, PLATFORMA has actively engaged with the European institutions to inform and constructively participate in shaping the EU development policy with two main objectives; i. strengthening EU support to local governance in partner countries and, ii. strengthening EU support to decentralised cooperation as an implementation means of development cooperation.

In 2015, PLATFORMA signed a Strategic partnership with the European Commission Directorate-General for International Development and Cooperation, whereby signatories commit to take actions based on common values and objectives to tackle global poverty and inequality, and to promote democracy and sustainable development.

¹ European Parliament. Report on "the role of local authorities in developing countries in development cooperation" (2015/2004(INI)). July 2015.

² European Commission Communication "Empowering Local Authorities in Partner Countries for enhance governance and more effective development outcomes". May 2013.

³ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Global Taskforce for local and regional governments, and UN Habitat. Report 'Dialogue on localizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda'. October 2014.