



## The EU's New Migration Partnership Framework with third countries:

### Local governments are key to its success!

#### PLATFORMA position

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*PLATFORMA – the network of local and regional governments for development cooperation between Europe and partner countries – calls on the European Union to:*

- **Remove the link between development aid and partner countries' performance in migration and reject the diversion of development funds to security-related projects.**
- **Give local governments in partner countries a voice in the design, implementation and evaluation of the “compacts” between the European Union and their national governments – particularly in three core policy fields for local governments:**
  - **Local Economic Development**
  - **Resilience to crises**
  - **Administrative reform and decentralisation**
- **Promote city to city cooperation between Europe and partner countries as a key instrument for the implementation of the new approach.**

Domestic challenges posed by migration have been the main focus of the response to the current crisis. Indeed, European local and regional governments (LRGs) have been at the frontline when it comes to hosting refugees and have called EU institutions and Member States to make funds available to face the needs – as made explicit in the [CEMR call for a Real Common European Asylum Policy](#)<sup>1</sup>.

However, the **European Union (EU) is increasingly looking into how external action can help Europe better manage migration flows**. The upcoming discussions around the report “Addressing the Refugee Crisis in Europe: The Role of EU External Action” of the European Parliament are a good example of this interest. Indeed, “addressing the root causes” has become a recurrent theme in meetings and EU leaders’ speeches.

Against this background, the **European Commission announced its New Migration Partnership Framework with third countries**<sup>2</sup> on June 7, described as an instrument “to mobilise and focus EU action and resources in our external work on managing migration”. Moreover the Commission presented an External Investment Plan<sup>3</sup> on September 14, based on the principles of the Investment Plan for Europe, in order to mobilise investments in Africa and the neighbourhood.

**PLATFORMA believes that for this new approach to be successful, the European Union should:**

- 1. Remove the link between development aid and partner countries’ performance in migration and reject the diversion of development funds to security-related projects**

The New Migration Partnership Framework on migration calls for the “development of a mix of positive and negative incentives” and states that the “relationship between the EU and the partner country will be guided in particular by the ability and willingness of the country to cooperate on migration management”.

However, according to the article 208 of the Treaty of Lisbon, **the first objective of development aid is to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty, not to stem irregular migration flows**. Development cooperation is meant to address a well of long-term global issues such as climate, inclusive economic growth, and political stability, reflecting the interconnected nature of the world’s current main challenges. Therefore, tying it to migration would be dangerously short-sighted, jeopardizing long-term, global objectives to the short-term concerns dominating Europe’s current political agenda. By tying development aid to migration, implementation of the New Migration Partnership Framework could be running in contradiction with the Treaty.

Moreover, the new **approach could also entail the diversion of European Development Fund resources**, which are intended to fund development projects, towards projects pursuing security objectives, such as border management and control. While EU Member States are already unable to reach the target of devoting 0,7% of their GDP to development aid, this diversion would worsen the funding gap.

Finally, the **objective of the External Investment Plan to mobilise an additional €44 billion in public and private investments could be difficult to meet**. The Plan also relies on a €3 billion contribution from EU Member States, who have often failed to live up to the expectations – in the case of the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, as of June 2016, EU Member States had only pledged around €80 million, compared to the Commission’s €1.8 billion<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Call for a real common European asylum policy. Council of European Municipalities and Regions. April 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Communication on “Establishing a new Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration”. European Commission. June 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Communication on “Strengthening European Investments for jobs and growth: Towards a second phase of the European Fund for Strategic Investments and a new European External Investment Plan”. European Commission. September 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Pledged contributions - EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. European Commission. June 2016.

## 2. Give local governments in partner countries a voice in the design, implementation and evaluation of the “compacts” between the European Union and their national governments – particularly in three core policy areas

Despite the talk on addressing the root causes, **the New Migration Partnership Framework does not stress enough the need to invest in local capacities.** Access to development funding remains difficult for local and regional governments in partner countries. Most EU grants are ill-suited for LRGs’ management capacities due to their considerable size and burdensome regulations. **The Partnership Framework should address this funding gap**, by devoting a substantial percentage of the funds to actions implemented by local governments and investing in overall governance capacities at local level to properly draft, plan and implement bankable projects.

The fact that the External Investment Plan has as one of its three pillars the stepping up of technical assistance with partner countries is a step in the right direction. However, **the Communication makes no reference to local governments as recipients of this technical assistance.** This is surprising given that the identification of investment opportunities and the improvement of the investment environment at the local level cannot be done in any meaningful way without subnational governments’ involvement. **Local governments should be made structural partners in all three pillars of the External Investment Plan.** Although the EIP’s reliance blended finance can constitute a positive and innovative way of mobilizing further investments, the ownership of local communities and the involvement of local governments must be ensured to guarantee positive impacts on the economy and society.

Moreover, the Communication makes no reference to what the governing structures of the Partnership Framework will look like. Yet this is of crucial importance to ensure the voice of stakeholders such as local and regional governments is heard. This requires a **permanent presence for the latter in the governance structure of the compacts with third countries.**

**LRGs have many interconnected competences. Three are particularly relevant when addressing issues that are at the root of today’s migration crisis:**

### • Local economic development

Economic development has a strong local dimension because of the weight small and medium enterprises 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.** Security of property and predictability, coherent territorial and land planning, transparency and accountability of administrations, local procurement policies and inserting informal economy into the formal system and access to local markets are all important preconditions for local economic development.

#### **Good practice: Empowering local governments in Swaziland to implement national economic strategies locally**

The Swaziland national Poverty Reduction Strategy and Action Plan identifies decentralisation and strengthening governance as a key priority.

The Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) facilitated a partnership with the Swaziland Local Government Association (SWALGA), the Local Authority Managers Association of Swaziland (LAMAS) and three urban authorities (Mbabane, Manzini and Matsapha) to collaborate with the national government.

The experiences in Swaziland how clear coordination between central government and local government leads to improved efficiencies and effectiveness in service delivery.

### • Local resilience to crises

Shocks, natural or man-made, are important push factors for migration, as shown by the ongoing consequences of the Syrian civil war. **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. In some cases, a local approach to peace-building - through mediation between different communities, enhancement of the role of local governments in community building and reconciliation, community policing, etc. - can prove to be the most efficient solution. As outlined in the Secretary-General's Agenda for Humanity presented ahead of the World Humanitarian Summit, the humanitarian system should rely more on local capacities, enabling and supporting these actors in the response to crises.

**Good Practice: Municipal Assistance to Al Za'atari Refugee Camp and Local Governments in Al Mafraq Governorate**

The Dutch Association of Municipalities (VNG) has sought to assist the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in designing an integrated spatial planning approach and a local participatory model for Za'atari refugee camp in northern Jordan.

Development planning and quick-win urban interventions were also identified in the Mafraq governorate where Za'atari camp is situated. The purpose was to address service bottlenecks created by the Syrian refugee influx in the host communities.

Finally, the project also aimed at assisting UNHCR in the incorporation of municipal expertise in the humanitarian response.

- **Public administration reform**

Local governments, like all stakeholders, need an enabling environment to be able to deliver on their competences. **Promoting a comprehensive decentralisation framework, with clear core powers and responsibilities and a transfer of corresponding financial resources**, will ensure that local and regional governments in partner countries can carry out their responsibilities effectively. These include the reception of refugees and the effective delivery of good quality basic services. Qualitative and effective decentralisation can also be an important instrument to fight against corruption and increase the accountability of local governments to their citizens.

**Good Practice: Partnership between Guyancourt and Comè on local taxation**

The cities of Guyancourt in France and Comè in Benin are engaged in a partnership since 2004 focusing on local taxation. The partnership started with a training aimed at reinforcing the capacities of the municipal staff of the City of Comè to mobilize local resources and ensuring land security.

It has now recently focused on registering the physical addresses of all buildings. This will facilitate the collection of local taxes as well as the delivery of basic public services.

### **3. Promote city to city cooperation between Europe and partner countries as a key instrument for the implementation of the new approach.**

The EU approach to migration and crises remains an exclusive “state to state club”, with no hint of supporting city to city or region to region partnerships. This comes despite the fact that Europe's towns and regions have an established tradition of working with their counterparts in third countries, creating employment opportunities, building local resilience, and improving governance.

In particular, Europe's towns and regions have ample experience to share with their peers in partner regions on:

- **Building capacity and sharing technical expertise in local management and planning**

There is a lack of understanding of the potential role **European local and regional governments can play in helping address these root causes, through capacity-building** of and sharing of expertise with their counterparts in third countries. In the field of climate action, for instance, European LRGs, whose commitment to climate change action has been demonstrated in initiatives such as the Covenant of Mayors or Mayors Adapt, can also provide valuable guidance to LRGs in partner countries when it comes to designing climate

action plans at the local level. These type of partnerships also ensure ownership by local governments and local communities of the programs implemented in their territories as well as an efficient allocation of resources.

**Good Practice: Turkish-Swedish Partnership for Local Democracy**

The Turkish-Swedish Partnership for Local Governance is a project implemented by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) and the Union of Municipalities of Turkey (UMT). Its purpose is to enhance local governance through the strengthening of UMT's capacity on planning and development, lobbying, training for local politicians and civil servants.

The project also seeks to improve municipal service provision through training on sustainable urban planning, including participatory techniques such as participatory budgeting.

- **Facilitating integration in host communities**

It is at the local level, under the responsibility of local and regional governments that the integration of the newcomers will fail or succeed. Therefore, **decentralised cooperation can help get a better grasp of the needs and cultures of the newcomers and raise the awareness** of the local population about the challenges faced by migrants in their countries of origin. Partnerships with cities and towns of migrants' countries of origin could take several forms, including cultural exchanges, technical sharing of expertise, etc.

**Good Practice: Tunis-Koln exchange between police forces to help dialogue between communities**

In Germany, the city of Cologne's local police force has been trained by policemen from the city of Tunis in Tunisia in order to increase the former's cultural sensitivity towards Muslim minorities.

This peer-to-peer exchange shows how decentralized cooperation is not only a one-way exchange, but also a partnership from which both sides can learn.

- **Creating conducive conditions for migrants' voluntary return**

A significant percentage of migrants living and working in European countries end up deciding to return to their countries of origin after a certain period of time. By doing so, they contribute with their experiences, competences and knowledge to the development of their territories of origin. Decentralised cooperation can again play an **important role in smoothening migrants' return by assisting local governments in third countries** with the implementation of short-term reintegration assistance, such as access to finance, information on employment opportunities, and cultural dialogue.

**Good Practice: VNG and the Association of Municipalities of Mali team up for reconciliation**

The Dutch Association of Municipalities (VNG) has implemented its "Local Government Capacity Programme" in Mali from 20012 to 2016. It aimed at restoring a climate of peace and security at the local level after the crisis resulting from the Tuareg/djihadist rebellion.

For this, VNGi provided coaching and training to staff of the Association of Municipalities of Mali to reinforce their capacity to lobby the central government on decentralization reforms. Technical assistance was also provided to help Malian municipalities design instruments for reconciliation.

Since its creation in 2008, PLATFORMA has been the voice of European local and regional governments active in decentralised cooperation – the town to town, region to region development cooperation, closer to citizens and more effective.

PLATFORMA's role is to increase recognition of the work of local and regional governments in international cooperation, deepen the dialogue with European institutions and promote effective decentralised cooperation for the development of partner countries.

In 2015, PLATFORMA signed a Strategic partnership with the European Commission Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), 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.

The Secretariat of PLATFORMA is hosted by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).

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