

PLATFORMA working group on the European development policy

Observations on European Commission proposal for a new regulation establishing a financing instrument for development cooperation (DCI)

Since its creation in 2008, PLATFORMA, the European platform of local and regional authorities for development, has coordinated the voice of these actors and their representative associations vis-à-vis the European institutions¹.

PLATFORMA activities are co-financed by the European Commission in the framework of the Non State Actors and Local Authorities thematic programme (NSA-LA).

Involved in a regular dialogue with the European Commission, PLATFORMA has contributed to many consultations on the European development policy and took part in the Structured dialogue in 2010 and 2011.

PLATFORMA has worked in preparation for the post-2013 European financial framework and disseminated the observations of local and regional authorities (LRAs) involved in development cooperation in this regard. This document presents our various comments on the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI).

General principles

- i. The Communication "An Agenda for Change" is the political basis of the future DCI. This communication confirmed the recognition of LRAs' specific role in development, stressed an actor-based approach, and thus represented a very positive step forward which was supported by PLATFORMA at the preparatory consultation.
PLATFORMA urges the European Commission to ensure that such an approach is reflected in the new DCI architecture.
- ii. Local and regional authorities are public elected institutions; they are accountable for implementing public policies on the basis of their decentralised powers, and represent the level of government the closest to the people.
PLATFORMA would like to highlight that LRAs and CSOs are different in nature. CSOs play a crucial but different role in development. PLATFORMA requests a stronger differentiation between these two sets of actors in the DCI regulation.
- iii. **PLATFORMA urges the European Commission to consult local and regional authorities on a more systematic basis (article 3.10).** The European Commission has initiated and institutionalised a structured dialogue with civil society and local authorities since 2010, and this should now be an acquis.

¹ More information : <http://www.platforma-dev.eu/>

PLATFORMA supports the commitment of the Union and the Member States to consult LRA at an early stage of the programming process (article 10.2), and in particular on thematic programmes (article 13.3).

- iv. To be consistent with the Agenda for Change, **the eligibility of local and regional authorities should be made explicit in the whole DCI programmes**, both thematic and geographic.

Geographic programmes

- v. **PLATFORMA supports a phased transition of the EU cooperation with 19 middle-income countries instead of taking them out of the scope of the EU bilateral cooperation as put forward in the Commission's proposal.** Significant poverty zones remain in these countries, where the majority of the planet's poor live. Interrupting all kind of bilateral cooperation without any transition phase would destroy efforts jointly made by the EU and these countries for their local and national development over the past years.
- vi. **PLATFORMA urges the European Commission to reconsider focussing bilateral cooperation on three sectors only by country**, and calls for some flexibility in the sectors to be prioritized and supported by the EU. There should be room for readjustment in the course of the programming period.
- vii. In any case, geographic programmes have to reflect the priorities of the Agenda for Change, i.e. governance and democracy, including at the local level. **PLATFORMA encourages the European Commission to strongly interlink the role of LRAs with local governance and democracy: there can be no democracy without local democracy, nor governance without local governance (Annex IV).**

Therefore, we call for support for decentralisation and local governance being made a cross-cutting priority in all geographic programmes, on the basis of the global evaluation of the European Commission's support to decentralisation processes which was published in March 2012.
- viii. **We propose to strengthen article 11.1 in order to foresee that all levels of governance are consulted** in the processes of preparing country strategy papers and of conducting programmes' mid-term reviews, and plan for a preparatory and information phase to facilitate the inclusion of national associations of local and regional government.

Thematic programmes

- ix. PLATFORMA acknowledges that there is greater consistency from having only two thematic programmes, one based on a thematic approach (Global Public Goods) and the other one on an actor-based approach (NSA-LA).
- x. **PLATFORMA urges the Commission to ensure that all the conditions for the participation of LRAs are met (eligibility, approach and sectors).** The European Commission should take into account the growing powers of local and regional authorities in the sectors relating to this programme (environment and climate change, energy, human development etc) and their potential for a more inclusive development in partner countries.

- xi. **We support the renewed vision of the NSA-LA programme as presented in Annex V, and propose a few amendments in the definitions.**

- xii. We welcome the proposed budget increase of the NSA-LA programme up to 2 billion euro for the 2014-2020 period. This will provide enhanced means for local development needs, for the right of initiative and local and regional governments' self-government. **We would like to recall our request for an evaluation of the NSA-LA programme, and encourage the European Commission to consider reassessing the division of the budget lines between non-state actors and local authorities on this basis.**

- xiii. **In order to maximise the programme's efficiency and to ensure the participation of local and regional authorities as large as possible, it is crucial that the programme's modalities be revised.** During the Structured dialogue in 2010 and 2011, PLATFORMA provided proposals for change and remains at the Commission's disposal to examine how feasible the proposals are and according to what conditions they could be implemented. Among the main issues are the eligibility criteria, that we would like to expand for a wider range of countries to take part in the programme (including countries benefiting from the EDF since local authorities from these countries are barely involved in the EU supporting programmes which are implemented by central governments).

DCI

COM(2011) 840 final

Amendment proposals

TITLE II - OBJECTIVES AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1st Amendment (Article 3)

Regulation proposal

4. Particular attention shall be given to strengthening the rule of law, improving access to justice and supporting civil society, trade and sustainable development, access to ICTs, health and food security, as well as promoting dialogue, participation and reconciliation, and institution-building.

Amendment

4. Particular attention shall be given to strengthening the rule of law, improving access to justice and supporting civil society, ***supporting decentralisation***, trade and sustainable development, access to ICTs, health and food security, as well as promoting dialogue, participation and reconciliation, and institution-building, ***including at the local and regional levels.***

2nd Amendement (Article 3)

Regulation proposal

10. The Commission shall seek regular exchanges of information with civil society.

Amendment

10. The Commission shall seek regular exchanges of information with civil society ***and local and regional authorities.***

TITLE IV – PROGRAMMING AND ALLOCATION OF FUNDS

3rd Amendement (Article 11)

Regulation proposal

1.Strategy papers are documents drawn up by the Union to provide a coherent framework for development cooperation between the Union and the partner country or region concerned, consistent with the overall purpose and scope, objectives, principles and policy of the Union.
The preparation and implementation of

Amendment

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strategy papers shall comply with the principles of aid effectiveness: national ownership, partnership, coordination, harmonisation, alignment with recipient country or regional systems, mutual accountability and results orientation as laid down in Article 3(5) to (8).

To that end, strategy papers shall, in principle, be based on a dialogue between the Union and the partner country or region, involving **where appropriate**, the relevant Member States, and the partner country or region, involving civil society and regional and local authorities, so as to ensure that the country or region concerned takes sufficient ownership of the process and to encourage support for national development strategies, particularly those for reducing poverty.

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To that end, strategy papers shall, in principle, be based on a dialogue between the Union and the partner country or region, involving the relevant Member States, and the partner country or region, involving civil society and regional and local authorities ***through their representative associations***, so as to ensure that the country or region concerned takes sufficient ownership of the process and to encourage support for national development strategies, particularly those for reducing poverty.

This dialogue takes place following a consultation and information phase for local and regional authorities and civil society.

ANNEXE IV – AREAS OF COOPERATION UNDER GEOGRAPHIC PROGRAMMES

4th Amendment

(A.I. Human rights, democracy and other key elements of good governance)

Regulation proposal

- (a) Democracy, human rights and the rule of law;
- (b) Gender equality and the empowerment of women;
- (c) Public sector management;
- (d) Tax policy and administration;
- (e) Corruption;
- (f) Civil society and local authorities;
- (g) Natural resources; and
- (h) Development-security nexus.

Amendment

- (a) Democracy, human rights and the rule of law;
- (b) Gender equality and the empowerment of women;
- (c) Public sector management;
- (d) Decentralisation and local governance***
- ~~(e)~~ Tax policy and administration;
- ~~(f)~~ Corruption;
- ~~(g)~~ Civil society and local authorities;
- ~~(h)~~ Natural resources; and
- ~~(i)~~ Development-security nexus.

5th Amendement

(A.II Inclusive and sustainable growth for human development)

Regulation proposal

- (a) Social protection, health, education and jobs;
- (b) Business environment, regional integration and world markets; **and**
- (c) Sustainable agriculture and energy.

Amendment

- (a) Social protection, health, education and jobs;
- (b) Business environment, regional integration and world markets;
- (c) Sustainable agriculture and energy, **and**
- (d) *Urbanisation and access to basic services for all***

6th Amendement

(A. III Other areas of significance for Policy Coherence for Development)

Regulation proposal

- (a) Climate change and environment;
- (b) Migration and asylum; **and**
- (c) Transition from humanitarian aid and crisis response to long-term development cooperation.

Amendment

- (a) Climate change and environment;
- (b) Migration and asylum;
- (c) Transition from humanitarian aid and crisis response to long-term development cooperation; **and**
- (d) *Urban and territorial management and slum upgrading***

ANNEXE V – AREAS OF ACTIVITY UNDER THEMATIC PROGRAMMES

7th Amendement

(B. Programme on civil society organisations and local authorities)

Regulation proposal

Activities supported by this programme will encompass:

- (a) interventions in partner countries which support vulnerable and marginalised groups in least developed countries by providing basic services delivered through **civil society organisations and** local authorities;

Amendment

Activities supported by this programme will encompass:

- (a) interventions in partner countries which support vulnerable and marginalised groups in least developed countries by ***improving local governance and*** providing basic services delivered through local authorities; ***and by facilitating their participation and representation in local life and in the development process through civil society organisations.***

8th Amendement

(B. Programme on civil society organisations and local authorities)

Regulation proposal

Local authorities encompass a large variety of sub-national levels and branches of government, i.e. municipalities, communities, districts, counties, provinces, regions **etc.**

Amendment

Local authorities encompass a large variety of sub-national levels and branches of government, i.e. municipalities, communities, districts, counties, provinces, regions, ***and their associations at national, regional and global level.***