

The Future of the CSO-LA instrument

Local and Regional Governments recall the main objective: Enhancing Local Authorities' contribution to governance and development processes

09/04/2018

Table of Content

1. Key messages
2. The rationale behind supporting local authorities
3. 2018-2020: Ensuring local self-governance remains at the centre¹
 - Priority 1 – Enhancing Local Authorities' contribution to governance and development process at country level
 - Priority 2 – Reinforcing regional and global networks and associations of Local Authorities
 - Priority 3 – Develop and support Education and Awareness Raising initiatives fostering citizens' awareness of and mobilisation for development issues
4. 2021-2027: Maintaining the legacy of the CSO-LA

1. Key messages:

- Local and regional governments reaffirm that support for local authorities is best delivered by local authorities and their representative networks.
- EU Support to regional and local authorities must focus on strengthening their capacities towards local self-governance
- The EU must scale up the political dialogue with associations of local and regional governments at national, regional and global level
- The EU must seek to tap into the expertise of European cities and regions in elaborating and implementing local (urban) development policies and leverage the capacities of Europe's towns and regions to cooperate with local governments in partner countries as a means to deliver support not as an end-goal in itself.
- The support to local and regional governments' capacities towards local self-governance must be extended also in the next multi-annual financial framework.

¹ The priorities are described in the Multi-annual indicative programme for the Thematic Programme "Civil society organisations and Local authorities" for the period 2014-2020, Brussels, 15.07.2014, C(2014) 4865

2. The rationale behind supporting local and regional authorities

1. The Civil Society Organisation-Local Authorities (CSO-LA) thematic program of the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) was set up to support CSOs and local government's role in development cooperation. They are both development and governance players with specific missions and mandates, which are different and complementary to those of central governments.
2. Local and Regional Governments are policy makers in their own right and competences, implementing their own development strategies at the local level. The European Union has repeatedly recalled its support for the key role of local and regional governments in sustainable development. In particular, through the 2008 Communication "Local Authorities: Actors for development" and 2013 Communication "Empowering Local Authorities in partner countries for enhanced governance and more effective development".
3. The new European Consensus for Development which guides the evolutions of the development cooperation policy states in particular:
"86. The achievement of most of the SDGs is strongly dependent on the active involvement of local and regional authorities. The EU and its Member States will support transparency, accountability and decentralisation reforms, where appropriate, to empower regional and local authorities for better governance and a better development impact, and to better address inequalities within countries. They will support processes to help people interact effectively with local government at all stages of policy planning and implementation, and will strengthen their cooperation with local and other sub-national authorities, including through decentralised cooperation"
4. With the mid-term review of the External Financing Instruments and the expected evolution of the local authorities component of the CSO-LA program in particular, local and regional governments gathered in PLATFORMA – the network of LRGs and their associations active for decentralised development cooperation between Europe and partner countries – recall that the EU's support to local authorities must remain focused on strengthening their capacities as actors of sustainable development and inclusive governance. They address the following messages to the European Union Institutions and Member States:

3. 2018-2020: Ensuring local self-governance remains at the centre²

Priority 1 – Enhancing Local Authorities' contribution to governance and development process at country level

1. **Recall that ownership is a fundamental principle of the aid effectiveness agenda, and therefore the local and regional governments in partner countries must be in position and capacity to identify, develop, monitor, integrate in their regional and local policies agendas and implement themselves the development strategy of their territory, through multi-stakeholder dialogue involving citizens and local institutions and/or other sectors (e.g. universities, hospitals, local businesses, etc).**
2. **Recall that the local authority component of this programme should be designed for local and regional governments and by local and regional governments. The DCI regulation (article 8, §1) states in relation to the CSO-LA thematic programme that "The actions to be financed shall be primarily carried out by civil society organisations and local authorities."**

² The priorities are described in the Multi-annual indicative programme for the Thematic Programme "Civil society organisations and Local authorities" for the period 2014-2020, Brussels, 15.07.2014, (2014) 4865

- 3. Strongly insists that a programme supporting decentralised entities must be implemented in a decentralised way, by local and regional governments and their representative associations, i.e. by the beneficiaries themselves.**
- 4. Recommend therefore that national, regional and global associations of local and regional governments be involved in the identification, elaboration, implementation and monitoring of the projects to be financed.**
- 5. Recall that strengthening the capacities and ability of CSOs and Local Authorities to be actors of development and governance is the main objective of the CSO-LA programme.**
- 6. Recall that testing pilot actions promoting local and regional development through a territorial approach is a Specific Objective (1.3) of the CSO-LA MIP 2014-2020. It is PLATFORMA's opinion that this approach has not been sufficiently explored in the period 2014-2017 while it is by definition a comprehensive and inclusive approach, answering in a transversal way to the political priorities of the 2008 and 2013 communications on local authorities.**
- 7. Call therefore on the European Commission to ensure that Territorial Approach to Local Development will effectively be mainstreamed in the implementation of the CSO-LA programme for 2018-2020. Most specifically, call on the EU to go forward to reinforce a more innovative cooperation with territorial and regional dimension, in line with some of the main conclusions of the study PLATFORMA "Shaping a new generation of decentralised cooperation for enhanced effectiveness and accountability"³.**
- 8. Call on the EU to focus most of the efforts on intermediary and medium-sized cities where the bulk of demographic and urban growth is expected. In addition, the definition of beneficiary cities must ensure that a maximum number of partner countries can be covered, in particular in the Eastern neighbourhood where only a minority of cities have more than one million inhabitants.**
- 9. Call on the EU to adopt an inclusive and comprehensive approach through addressing city-systems: including smaller towns and rural peripheries with which the urban centres interact.**
- 10. Recall that local authorities are one component of the State architecture, and therefore their development and capacity for local-self-governance depend very much on national policies, institutional setting, state of decentralisation, tax decentralisation, etc. Support to cities and regions must therefore include actions at national level with national associations of local and regional governments in partner countries.**
- 11. Recall that in order to benefit a maximum number of cities and regions in partner countries – hence benefitting a maximum number of citizens – and in order to better assess the needs of cities and territories in partner countries, the EU must involve the national and regional associations of local and regional governments. This will ensure the sustainability of the actions and that the financed projects include a potential for replication (sustainability) and the possibility to share experiences and lessons learnt with other cities and territories in the partner country (upscaling). In addition, associations of local and regional governments are key actors of national policies and reforms, advocating towards their national government on behalf of their members.**

³ <http://platforma-dev.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/PLATFORMA-CPMR-Study-New-generation-EN.pdf>

- 12. Welcome an increased recognition of decentralised cooperation, city-to-city / region-to-region partnerships and twinning as an efficient method to strengthen the capacities of the local and regional governments in partner countries. The EU should take stock of lessons learnt and of the new and innovative approaches to international action developed by European local and regional governments and their associations.**
- 13. Call on the EU Institutions to stay open to the existing variety of approaches and methodologies and demonstrated results: depending on the partners, their capacities, the national legal, institutional, financial context and the state of decentralisation; there is no “one approach fits all” with local and regional governments.**

Priority 2 – Reinforcing regional and global networks and associations of Local Authorities

- 14. Welcome the continuation of EU support to networks of local and regional governments through Framework Partnership Agreements (FPAs), as it significantly strengthens the networks and their partners.**
- 15. Call on the European Commission to scale up its dialogue with the associations of local and regional governments with which it has signed a Framework Partnership Agreement. This dialogue should be continuous and addressing all policies and programmes relevant or impacting local and regional governments in partner countries**
- 16. Recall that it is a natural outcome of the FPA's that its signatories be consulted on the design, implementation and monitoring of the priority 1 (action in partner country at city level)**
- 17. Welcome and call on the European Commission to continue having regular multi-stakeholder dialogues between local and regional governments, civil society organisations, private sector and the European Institutions.**

Priority 3 – Develop and support Education and Awareness Raising initiatives fostering citizens' awareness of and mobilisation for development issues

- 18. Recall that European cities and regions that are active through international cooperation are also key players in raising awareness of their citizens on issues related to global public goods and development challenges.**
- 19. Call therefore on the EU Institutions to keep enshrined in this programme the principle of multi-stakeholder action and insist on involving local and regional governments in the development education and awareness raising activities together with civil society organisations.**
- 20. Recall that local and regional governments have different functions and ways of working than civil society organisations: they are elected by the citizens with a political mandate, they have to abide by democratic processes and rules in order to take decisions. Development cooperation and awareness raising is only one of the many policies a local or regional government has to work on.**
- 21. Call therefore on the European Commission to elaborate dedicated modalities of participation for local and governments that allow a maximum number of cities and regions to take part, allowing sufficient time for the executive body of the local and regional governments to approve the project and without requiring important co-financing and administrative burden that are only dissuade local and regional governments from applying to a DEAR call for proposal.**

3. 2021-2027: Maintaining the legacy of the CSO-LA

1. Recall that different evaluations including the external evaluations commended by DG DEVCO, as well as the analysis of the European Parliamentary Research Service confirmed the relevance and complementarity of the thematic programmes GPGC and CSO-LA in particular.
2. Is concerned that the proposed merging of most of the External Financing Instrument into a single instrument would dilute the EU support to the specific development priorities such as democracy, human rights and the support to civil society organisations and local authorities as development actors in their own right
3. Understands the advantages of designing a flexible framework, that will allow the EU to answer timely to unforeseen crises. Recall however that flexibility should not come at the expenses of predictability and that *“Aid is more effective when regular, detailed and timely information on aid volumes and allocations is available. This allows developing countries to make their own strategic plans, to link development strategies with budgetary frameworks and to ensure effective use of resources.”*⁴
4. Call on the EU Institutions to come up with guarantees that the acquis et achievements made so far in support local and regional governments, and decentralisation reforms in partner countries will be continued. Suggest for instance that Territorial Approach to Local Development be a mainstreamed approach throughout the MFF; or the creation of a specific programme to support localisation of SDGs, in line with paragraph 86 of the new European Consensus on Development.

⁴ OECD “2012 DAC Report on Aid Predictability – Survey on Donor’s Forward Spending Plans 2012-2015 and efforts since HLF-4” [https://www.oecd.org/dac/aid-architecture/2012_DAC_Report_on_Aid_Predictability.pdf]