

Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa

PLATFORMA Comments

On 9 March 2020, the joint communication [Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa](#) was released by the European Commission (EC) and the European External Action Service (EEAS). It will serve as the EU's input for the African Union - European Union Summit, which will take place at the end of October.

The key role of the “local level” at different stages is clearly acknowledged: the “*impact [of EU development policy in Africa] on the governance at local level*”, the intensification of “*people-to-people contacts through exchange programmes, joint research activities or twinning initiatives*” and the potential increase of “*strategic and operational coordination and joint action at headquarters and partner country level with EU Member States and other actors, such as [...] local authorities*”.

Priorities are related to local and regional governments’ competences

PLATFORMA welcomes the efforts of the EC and the EEAS to include in their strategy the human dimension of development, as well as the principles of good governance, democracy, rule of law and gender equality. However we call on EU institutions to remain particularly vigilant on **local democracy and local governance**, and to actively **ensure their promotion and support**. Local and Regional Governments are key partners in the design and implementation of institutional reforms, answering to urban challenges, including greening the territories, and modernising and digitalising administration and public services to citizens.

Local and Regional Governments are naturally part of the policy and political dialogue between the EU and the partner states on state reform process and all development-related issues mentioned in the Communication: green topics (circular economy, smart urbanisation, resilient infrastructure...) and economic development ones (health services, housing, clean water...) that are usually under cities or municipalities’ responsibility. Development in these fields requires not only the collaboration of African local actors, but also the great asset which is the expertise of European local actors.

Furthermore, as regards the peace and security priority, which aims to prevent conflicts, social cohesion is key. Participation and governance at the local level are essential to making governments and services closer to citizens and prevent the escalation of tensions.

Peer-to-peer cooperation and multilevel governance

In this context, we must highlight the importance of local government associations’ capacity building in partner countries and local government peer-to-peer development cooperation as a means to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other priorities. In particular, decentralised cooperation between Africa and Europe – city-to-city and region-to-region exchanges – is one important tool to guarantee Local and Regional Governments’ role in the development dynamic of partner countries. Multilevel dialogue promotes policy coherence within each country between the national, regional and local levels.

We also hope that this Communication will help reflect on policy coherence between the EU's internal policies and its external action: what impact do EU actions and decisions at all levels of governance

have on partner countries? For example, public procurement is a powerful tool for Local and Regional Governments to create more coherent policies and sustainable societies.

Roadmaps are another tool the EU could further use to structure work with Local and Regional Governments and their associations. Such documents can ensure the participation and consultation of towns and regions and their national associations for the implementation of European development policy in partner countries.

These tools allow beneficiary countries' Local and Regional Governments to increase their capacity, which is a key condition for societies' long-term development.

Local and Regional Governments and their National Associations are ready to work together with the European Union. The preparation of the EU-African Union Summit is a key step for our collaboration, especially given the possibility of an event dedicated to Local and Regional Governments: this would be an outstanding opportunity for ministers from both continents to have a fruitful dialogue with local and regional elected representatives. In the longer term, we are happy to engage with European Union's efforts to encourage a dialogue with towns and regions and to promote peace and sustainable development with Africa.

Concrete examples of cooperation partnerships with Africa:

The Bamako Declaration and alliance of local government associations from the G5 Sahel countries

Faced with the growing threat of terrorism and organised crime, the G5 Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Chad) and their partners have launched two initiatives:

- The *G5 Sahel Cross-Border Joint Force*, which demonstrates the willingness of Africans to take charge of their own military security;
- The *Sahel Alliance*, which is based on a reciprocal accountability approach between major development partners and G5 states.

If a military force and a state force were then created, the voice of local governments had not been taken into account so far. Yet they and their networks must be the actors of the sustainable development of their territories, closer to the people.

Based on this observation, networks of local authorities (Association of Municipalities of Mali, Association of Municipalities of Mauritania, Association of Regions of Mali, Association of Cities of Burkina Faso, Association of Regions of Burkina Faso, Association of Municipalities of Niger, Association Regions of Niger, a Mauritanian Region, local authorities members of these networks, Cités Unies France) have expressed their wish to work together to make the voice of local authorities heard and work towards the recognition of their central role as local actors.

For 8 months, Cités Unies France has accompanied this dynamic to qualify and strengthen associations of local authorities. This work culminated in the Bamako Declaration in May, and the formation of an alliance of local government associations from the G5 Sahel countries in August. The process continues with the organisation of training seminars on the mobilisation of domestic resources for local development.

PLATFORMAwards' projects in Africa

To promote development cooperation projects and collect data and indicators from the best European practices, PLATFORMA launched in 2017 the [PLATFORMAwards](#).

Out of 20 applications, 9 concerned projects and partnerships established between EU and African local and regional governments. The 1st winners were Dogbo in Benin and Roeselare in Belgium for a partnership on birth registration (discover the project in [video](#))

For the second edition of the PLATFORMAwards, 16 of the projects and partnerships presented concerned exchanges between EU and African local and regional governments, out of the 26 applications received (see below with main thematic).

EU town/region	EU country	Partner town/region	Partner country	Main thematic
Emilia-Romagna Region	Italy	Pemba Municipality	Mozambique	Fair cities
Milan	Italy	Quelimane	Mozambique	Waste management Agriculture
Département Yvelines	France	Aného	Togo	Access to water & sanitation
Zoersel	Belgium	Bohicon	Benin	Mental health
Växjö	Sweden	JB Marks Local Municipality	South Africa	equity/inclusion, transparency, accountability, citizen participation
Bornem	Belgium	Nquthu	South Africa	Waste management
Ville de Chatellerault	France	Commune de Kaya	Burkina Faso	Waste management
Harelbeke	Belgium	Eenhana	Namibia	Localising SDGs
Département de la Charente-Maritime	France	Commune Urbaine de Boffa	Guinea	Territorial development
Mairie d'Allonnes	France	Sangha	Mali	Access to water & sanitation
Sint-Niklaas	Belgium	Tambacounda	Senegal	Waste management
Basque Government/ Basque Agency for Development Cooperation (AVCD)	Spain	Government of Kenya/The Kenya Film Classification Board (KFCB)	Kenya	Inclusive development of rural communities and reducing urban-rural inequalities
Esporles Council	Spain	Council of Tenado	Burkina Faso	Access to water & sanitation
Conseil Départemental Seine Maritime	France	Communauté de Communes du Bam	Burkina Faso	Strengthen local governance
Mairie d'Orléans	France	Mairie de Parakou	Bénin	Access to water
Municipality Rheden	Netherlands	Municipality Rubavu Rwanda and municipality Langeberg South Africa	Rwanda South Africa	Strengthen local governance

PLATFORMA is the pan-European coalition of towns and regions – and their national, European and global associations – active in city-to-city and region-to-region development cooperation.

We are a hub of expertise on European local and regional governments’ international action, and aim at boosting European local and regional governments’ contribution to EU development cooperation policies and international frameworks.

In 2015, PLATFORMA signed a Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) with the European Commission. Its signatories commit to take actions based on common values and objectives to tackle global poverty and inequalities, while promoting local democracy and sustainable development. The Secretariat of PLATFORMA is hosted by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).

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Local and regional governments

