

PLATFORMA POLITICAL DECLARATION ON THE ROLE OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS IN THE NEXT MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK (MFF) AND EU EXTERNAL ACTION

On the occasion of the launch of European Commission's communication for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028–2034, we, as leaders of European Local and Regional Governments (LRGs), and their associations active in development cooperation, reaffirm our **unwavering commitment to continue working together for a free, democratic, prosperous, sustainable and competitive Europe for all citizens, both within and beyond our borders.**

We underscore the critical role of LRGs and their associations both in the Europe and in partner countries as actors for development, supporting with the delivery of a more impactful, flexible, and citizen-centred EU budget that upholds the values of subsidiarity and strengthens stability, multilevel governance, local economic prosperity, and global partnerships.

We express our deepest concern for the drastic reduction of development budgets across EU Member States as well as globally, and regret the rise of geopolitical tensions and volatility, increasing fragility, inequalities and economic turmoil.

Considering, the next EU mandate and negotiations for the long-term budget take place in a moment of mounting questions and pressures on the multilateral system, **the European Union must reinforce its capacity to act as an attractive and reliable partner amid a shifting landscape and new paradigm for its economic foreign policy.**

LRGs and their association both in the EU and in partner countries, play a crucial role in creating an enabling environment for local economic development, ensuring that EU external action is effective, targeted, and aligned with local realities. The presence of LRGs in fragile contexts and their ability to deliver services directly to communities in need, make them indispensable partners in promoting stability, democracy, and sustainable development.

Ahead of the next MFF negotiations, we call on EU leaders across Members States and the European Parliament to consider the following:

- 1. LRGs are essential assets for Team Europe in delivering the Global Gateway** – As the closest level of government to citizens, LRGs are best placed to implement sustainable, high-impact investments. LRGs must be directly involved in flagship projects, from identification to execution, to ensure long-term success and local ownership. The EU should fully integrate LRGs into the Global Gateway framework and the 360-degree approach, leveraging their networks, expertise, and decentralised cooperation to strengthen policy coherence and deliver tangible results.
- 2. Put LRGs in the driver seat of territorial development and prioritise capacity development, decentralisation and multilevel governance** – To secure the long-term sustainability of EU investments through amongst others, the Global Gateway, greater emphasis must be placed on strengthening local governments, decentralisation reforms and multilevel governance. Increasing technical support for LRGs will improve their access to funding, lending mechanisms, and investment planning. Strengthening ties with the private sector and using decentralised cooperation as a tool will further tailor funding to local realities. With a clear mandate, powers and responsibilities of all layers of government, it will be easier to work on transparency, accountability and predictability, with clear procedures and regulations. This will lead to greater sustainability of the investments done by the EU.



3. **Recognise LRGs as unique and effective partners in fragile contexts** – Create dedicated programming for LRGs and their European partners to provide ongoing support to populations in urgent need. LRGs are often the only functioning public institutions in fragile and conflict-affected areas, providing essential services, humanitarian aid, and disaster response. In contexts where national governments struggle to act, LRGs ensure continuity of governance and social stability. They are key partners in strengthening community resilience, peacebuilding, and crisis recovery. Through city diplomacy and Local Government associations, LRGs maintain open communication channels, fostering cooperation even in highly polarised political environments.
4. **Keep dedicated financing instruments to ensure responsiveness to global shocks and volatility** – Maintain separate allocations for Pre-Accession and the reconstruction of Ukraine, whilst the ensuring continuity of established funds for urgent crises and ongoing geographical and thematic programmes. Flexibility and simplification of instruments should not come at the expense of long-term programming efforts. Empowered LRGs accelerate economic and social integration, fostering closer ties between candidate countries and the EU, including supporting the mobilisation of European private sector actors. Recognising and supporting LRGs as key drivers of reform and economic recovery will strengthen EU enlargement strategies and reinforce local ownership of development plans.
5. **Strengthen EU Delegations’ engagement with LRGs** – The EU must further institutionalise its collaboration with LRGs by consistently ensuring dedicated focal points in all Delegations and enhancing dialogue and consultation structures. Funding mechanisms should be made more flexible and accessible, including tailoring calls for proposals, developing local framework partnership agreements (FPAs), and simplifying access to existing EU programmes for LRGs. To support structural inclusion of LRGs in country programming and the Global Gateway, tailored funding instruments, including the Civil Society Organisation-Local Authorities (CSO-LA) budget line can support LRGs as effective partners in the EU’s development cooperation.

Conclusion

Dialogue on the next MFF needs to take account of the crucial role that LRGs play in EU external action, notably concerning the Global Gateway and in fragile contexts. PLATFORMA, in partnership with other Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) signatories, will continue working to secure the support of Member States, the European Parliament, and like-minded civil society partners to ensure that LRGs and their associations remain central to the EU’s external action and policy frameworks.

About:

[PLATFORMA](#) is the pan-European coalition of towns and regions – and their national, EU and global associations – active in the field of development cooperation. It gathers 26 partners. Its Secretariat is hosted by the [Council of European Municipalities and Regions](#) (CEMR), Europe’s first and broadest association of Local and Regional Governments. PLATFORMA is co-financed by the European Union since 2008. PLATFORMA signed a Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) with the European Commission in 2015 with its most recent renewal in 2022.

