

DRAFT PLATFORMA POSITION PAPER ON THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP POST-2020 FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) celebrates its 10th anniversary this year, taking stock of 10 years of partnership, assessing the success of the [20 deliverables for 2020](#) and preparing the post-2020 partnership framework between the European Union, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Following the signature of Association Agreements between the EU and Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) needs to be fully included in the process and the post-2020 EU instruments should be adapted to LRGs mission: providing tangible results to citizens.

PLATFORMA, the pan-European coalition of local and regional governments and their associations active in development cooperation, is working with Eastern Partnership Associations of local and regional governments since 2002 through the Council of European Municipalities and Regions. Since 2015, PLATFORMA has developed an Eastern partnership programme aiming at strengthening local and regional governance, and developing capacity building of national associations of local authorities, in particular in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

Decentralised cooperation, as defined by the European Commission: “development cooperation between local authorities from the European Union and their counterparts from partner countries” has a multiplier effect on development cooperation policies. It provides support and expertise in the whole partner countries territory and at the closest level to citizens in diverse domains: good governance and democracy; environment, energy and climate action; gender equality; economic and social development and public services.

Adhering to the principle of subsidiarity, the EU should aim at promoting the role of Local Authorities as policy and decision-makers and increase the policy and political dialogue and coordination with local and regional governments, beyond national governments only.

The United Nations member states, along with the EU, have committed to implement the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, LRGs are major stakeholders of its [implementation with 70% of the world population living in cities by 2050](#).

Therefore we welcome the European institutions’ (DG NEAR) decision to launch an [evaluation of the EU support to local authorities from 2010 to 2018](#) in the neighbourhoods and pre-accession countries. This outlines the willingness of the European institutions to review its approach to local authorities and to translate its political commitment into actions in the Eastern neighbourhood and the pre-accession countries, in particular regarding the [recognition of local authorities as key actors of development](#) and the priorities [to support LAs and their Associations in partner countries](#) to unlock their development potential. PLATFORMA and its partners have been identified as major stakeholders and are supporting the evaluation process from the initial stages.

So far, local authorities were officially represented in the Eastern Partnership architecture by the [Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership \(CORLEAP\)](#), an assembly of the European Committee of the regions. Although we acknowledge the advisory work

and the political dialogue provided by CORLEAP through relevant thematic debates, we would like to see its representation extended and increase its capacity to support LRGs in substantial actions, such as demand oriented coaching and trainings.

Furthermore, several initiatives have been developed by the European Commission to support the EaP local and regional authorities, among the main ones: [Covenant of Mayors East](#), [Mayors for Economic Growth](#), [cross-border cooperation](#) with focal regions and support to decentralisation reforms in Ukraine with [U-lead](#). Despite the quality of the projects and the efforts of their coordinators, the EU support to Eastern partnership LRGs should be strengthened in order to reach the level of ambition of the Eastern partnership: deepen and strengthen relations between the EU Member States and LRGs and their counterparts at national and local level in the six Eastern neighbours and provide tangible results to its citizens.

PLATFORMA six recommendations

1. **Facilitate access of EaP municipalities and regions from Association Agreements signatories countries (Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) to European Union programmes and grants**, in particular programme with clear Sustainable development goals (SDGs) implementation ambition:
 - Extend the participation of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine LRGs to European Union's programmes to support sustainable planning, encourage local economic growth, investments in local infrastructure, facilitate experience exchanges and experimentation, such as the [URBACT](#) , the "Europe for Citizens" Programme or programme for the environment and climate action such as [LIFE](#). Raise the status of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine as full applicants and facilitate LRGs access to Horizon 2020 and Erasmus +.
 - Extend the TAIEX and Twinning programme to Local and Regional Governments in order to support the expertise of Eastern partnership local administrators and local elected representatives in the framework of their competences.
 - Provide training to EaP LRGs administrators to improve their EU expertise in the framework of the "[Eastern Partnership Academy for Public Administration](#)" proposed by the European Committee of the Regions. The Academy offer should be design in cooperation with local governments associations and be adapted to the EaP local needs such as trainings for EU call for projects applications, EBRD and EIB loans and SDGs implementation in particular the following themes:
 1. Energy, environment and climate action;
 2. Good governance and democracy;
 3. Local economic development;
 4. Youth in local public life;
 5. Gender Equality;
2. **Renew the EaP 20 deliverables on the basis of the 17 SDGs** in order to facilitate their achievement in the EaP;
 - Shift the 20 deliverables for a 2020 narrative towards the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals in order to align with United Nations 2030 Agenda and better prepare EaP countries to global challenges;
 - Support the localisation of SDGs in municipal plans, and the involvement of LRGs in the monitoring and reporting process;
 - The EU, its Delegations and the Member States should develop Country Roadmaps and indicators for engagement with Local and Regional Governments, as they do with Civil Society, in order to ensure an efficient policy

dialogue and to facilitate the localisation of SDGs as provided by recommendation 3 of [PLATFORMA 2nd Position paper on the NDICI](#)

3. **Guarantee the acquis of the decentralisation reforms** and ensure the participation of citizens in the development process by:
 - Maintaining DG NEAR and its specific expertise in the future EC structure and create a local and regional governments unit within DG NEAR on the basis of unit C5 of DG DEVCO. Beyond sustainable local development, it would help also address institutional issues such as transparency and rule of Law. The unit could facilitate the dialogue and the cooperation between the EU institutions, EU delegations and EaP LRGs and their associations in the framework of country working groups. On the basis of regular consultations with Associations of Local and Regional Authorities, the unit monitors and supports the implementation of decentralisation programme in EaP countries with the [European Charter of local self-Government](#) of the Congress of local and regional authorities of the Council of Europe as guideline.
 - Balancing the approach to development cooperation actors in the EaP between local governments and civil society organisations in order to strengthen a real LRGs development cooperation ownership, in particular by strengthening the participation of Associations of Local and Regional Authorities to the EaP Architecture. Permanent seats for elected representatives from the most representative European Networks of Local and Regional Authorities such as CEMR, PLATFORMA, NALAS, EUROCITIES and CPMR, should be granted within CORLEAP to diversify its expertise and audience. Secretary of national delegation should accompany elected representatives to guarantee their active participations and preparation.
 - Supporting the Territorial approach to local Development, by encouraging further collaboration in urban and rural territories between CSO and LRGs beyond capital cities

4. **Mainstream gender equality, youth, climate action and digitalisation** in the framework of cooperation development programmes ;
 - Encourage the signature of the European [Charter for equality between women and men in local life](#) in every local governments oriented initiatives;
 - Develop an EU-EaP Young local elected representative programme on the basis of the [YELAC programme](#), facilitating exchanges between young local leaders from the EU and the EaP and granting access of EaP LRGs to the Europe for Citizens programme. Thus facilitating the involvement of Youth in local public life and future cooperation programmes.
 - Strengthen the support to local governments' climate action and energy efficiency initiatives such as the Covenant of Mayors East and provide financial support to implement action plans.

5. **Adapt cooperation programme to EaP local and regional governments' demands** and not only to EU offer.
 - Design a thematic programme to support EaP LRGs to engage in decentralised cooperation and strengthen their competences via the diverse expertise provided by their EU peers as provided by recommendation 4 of [PLATFORMA 2nd Position paper on the NDICI](#)
 - Include higher levels of co-financing, up to 95%, in future EU programmes for LRGs and their associations, as provided by recommendation 5 of [PLATFORMA 2nd Position paper on the NDICI](#)

- Allow small and medium cities (from 50.000 inhabitants) consortium from the EaP to apply in future EC call for proposals as provided by recommendation 6 of [PLATFORMA 2nd Position paper on the NDICI](#)

6. Develop capacity building of Association of Local Authorities in EaP countries

- Facilitate the dialogue with the EU by nominating a reference person for local and regional governments in EaP countries Delegation of the European Union (as it exists in the DEU in Georgia), prepare a country roadmap for engagement with Local and Regional Governments.
- Involve the Associations of local and regional authorities in the design, management and steering of Cross-border cooperation and twinning programmes.
- Continue supporting Decentralised cooperation initiatives, programmes and funding to accompany EU local and regional governments and their associations active in partner countries.

PLATFORMA'S PARTNERS



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PLATFORMA is the pan-European coalition of local and regional governments – and their associations – active in town-to-town and region-to-region development cooperation. Since its creation in 2008, PLATFORMA has been representing more than 100,000 local and regional governments. All are key players in international cooperation for sustainable development.

The diversity of PLATFORMA's partners is what makes the network unique. PLATFORMA reflects the diversity of local and regional governments' realities in Europe and across the world.

The aim of PLATFORMA is to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and mutual learning, but also to strengthen the specific role of local and regional governments in development policies.

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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