



**European Committee
of the Regions**



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN REGIONAL AND LOCAL ASSEMBLY

ACTION PLAN 2018-2019

Adopted at the 9th ARLEM Plenary session on 21 February 2018 in Giza, Egypt

Regions and cities on the three shores of the Mediterranean are taking up the challenges facing them in various fields such as climate change, youth unemployment, demographic disparities, increasing urbanisation, integration of migrants etc. They are key players in transposing the UN sustainable Development Goals overall, including goal 11 for making "cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable".

Stability and a stronger partnership between the EU and its neighbours are pursued in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP): stabilisation of the neighbourhood through good governance, the rule of law, democracy and respect for human rights and democratic freedoms should become the main political priority of the ENP, stressing the need first to tackle the socio-economic root causes of the current security and migration challenges and focus on job creation and youth employability. Nevertheless, democratic and human rights standards can be imposed neither from the outside nor from above and instead have to develop from the ground up.

In order to solve the many challenges of the region, the EU recognises that it needs a stronger partnership with its neighbours. The EU and its southern and eastern partners no longer stand on separate sides but must work together as equal partners on the basis of equal rights and mutual benefit; the success of the revised ENP requires co-ownership thereof. We must also ensure that cooperation with the EU does not lead to competition between EU neighbourhood countries, but instead to regional and territorial cooperation. The multilateral dimension of the ENP is therefore indispensable.

Regional cooperation in the southern neighbourhood has seen progress through the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), which has proved to be a valuable forum for political and economic discussion, providing a framework for cooperation on issues of common interest and on operational projects in the region.

The objective of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) is to strengthen the role of local authorities in Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and to give a territorial dimension to the

Union for the Mediterranean. ARLEM considers that the European Neighbourhood Policy can only have an enduring impact if it brings practical benefits to the people of the EU's Member States and the ENP countries. It also emphasises that this requires a multilevel approach, from national to regional and local level, as well as regional, sub-regional and cross-border cooperation, and that more support must therefore be provided for decentralisation reforms in the neighbourhood countries.

1. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

During its current term of office, ARLEM will concentrate its work on the following three fields, so as to focus the Assembly's work where it can bring the greatest benefit to local and regional authorities on the three shores of the Mediterranean, as well as to make efficient use of the resources of the ARLEM secretariat.

1.1 Migration

In the Mediterranean area, the three categories of origin, transit and destination countries overlap in a unique way and several countries are changing from a transit to a destination profile. Cities and regions are at the forefront of efforts to tackle migration-related phenomena, which in many cases requires effective crisis management. In the medium term, the integration question must be addressed within the communities to ensure that people live together on a sustainable and equitable basis.

ARLEM points to the need to support cities, regions and communities receiving and assisting refugees and to provide them with adequate basic services and direct access to funds. ARLEM will continue to work towards better implementation of the EU's commitments under the ENP, namely to reinforce cooperation with neighbours in this area and to enable more effective cooperation on migration with countries outside the neighbourhood. Furthermore, sub-national authorities should do more to stress the importance of policies aimed at "circular migration", which would help balance the impact of migration on both home and host regions, contributing to the development of both. This includes the need for an effective and sustainable return policy.

On migration, ARLEM will build on the ARLEM report adopted in 2014 and several debates in ARLEM meetings, including the conference on migration with the contribution of several ARLEM members in Malta in February 2017 in the context of the Presidency of the Council of the EU. A topical debate on the role of local and regional authorities in managing migration will be held at the 9th plenary session in Giza (Egypt).

1.2 Sustainable economic development

Given the demographic structure of the Mediterranean partner countries, it is of utmost importance to provide education, training and employment prospects for young people, who tend to have a lower labour market participation rate than other population groups, exacerbated by a trend towards more precarious employment situations among younger sections of the population. Euro-Mediterranean cooperation can play a major role in realising people's ambitions in terms of economic growth and job creation. Local and regional authorities could be key players in such cooperation, provided they have the necessary resources and technical assistance. Decentralisation and regionalisation processes can provide an opportunity to be seized here.

A smart and resilient blue economy in terms of the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs, and ocean ecosystem health, raises promising prospects. In addressing this topic, ARLEM will create synergies with the CoR's work (opinion on Initiative for the Sustainable Development of the Blue Economy in the Western Mediterranean by rapporteur Samuel Azzopardi, MT/EPP) as well as with related UfM activities such as the stakeholder conference on the Blue Economy held in Naples in November 2017. At UfM level, discussion will be initiated in 2018 on a second potential ministerial meeting on the blue economy.

Over the past few years, tourism has been on the decline in Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and the Lebanon. Income from tourism has fallen drastically in Tunisia. Morocco faces the paradoxical situation of decreasing receipts with increasing number of tourists¹. Given the key role of tourism for many local communities in the Mediterranean partner countries, the concept of solidarity tourism could be developed at city and regional level to create a positive outlook. Another key issue in this context is the concentration of tourism in coastal areas; ARLEM could foster exchanges of experience on alternative tourism concepts. The context of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 is conducive to taking into account the role of culture as a factor in attracting more people to discover and engage with diverse cultures. This topic could be tackled by a specific workshop in the context of the European Week of Regions and Cities. A first ministerial meeting on tourism might be convened at UfM level during the 2018-2020 period.

In line with UN sustainable development goal 11 for making "cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable", ARLEM will continue to advocate a comprehensive and integrated sustainable urban development agenda. Following on from the UfM ministerial meeting on Sustainable Urban Development in Cairo in May 2017, ARLEM members stand ready to contribute to the different working groups of the UfM Regional Platform on Sustainable Urban Development, launched at the CoR in November 2017, and will report on the progress to the Assembly at its statutory meetings. This will be discussed at the 9th plenary session in Giza (Egypt), with the contribution of a high-level UfM representative.

ARLEM will also continue to support city alliances and diplomacy related to climate issues in line with its recent report.

1.3 Political future and good governance

Adequate powers and resources at the various levels of government, including the one closest to the level of the citizens, public administration reform and steps to foster transparency are key pillars of improved governance and it is therefore important to focus on them.

An exchange of experience could be envisaged between ARLEM members and local and regional representatives with partners getting ready to assume increased responsibilities in the context of national reforms.

¹ IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2017, p.335.

In line with its conclusions of 19 October 2017, in which the European Council "underscores the urgency of supporting the development of the local communities in Libya", the European Committee of the Regions and ARLEM will continue to politically support the Nicosia initiative of support for Libyan municipalities, a concrete example of decentralised cooperation for development in the Euro-Mediterranean context, and to follow up planned activities². Based on sound resource planning in advance of any steps taken, the possibility might be explored of expanding the Nicosia initiative to other countries.

Furthermore, the 2013 CoR publication on EU funding opportunities open for local and regional authorities from Mediterranean partner countries will be updated in 2018, based on a CoR study request.

2. THE POLITICAL DIMENSION

2.1 A forum for ongoing political dialogue

ARLEM provides a platform for political dialogue with the European and international institutions: the European Commission, European External Action Service (EEAS), Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), European Parliament, etc.

2.2 Contribution to consultative work through thematic reports

In 2018-2019, ARLEM, at the initiative of its members, may prepare thematic reports linked to some of its strategic priorities.

2.3 Representation of the local and regional level at UfM summits

ARLEM is bringing the voice of local and regional authorities to the table at UfM summits. More specifically, upon invitation, it may participate as an observer in, and contribute to, scheduled ministerial meetings and ad hoc senior official meetings (SOMs) (in addition to the regular SOMs) (see point 5).

3. THE ROLE OF PARTNERS FOR ARLEM

In pursuing its objectives, ARLEM will work together not only with the European associations³ representing LRAs who, as ARLEM members, play an active role in its activities and projects, but also with a number of other partners, seeking to participate in the major transnational events and initiatives they are planning for 2018-2019.

ARLEM will involve representatives from Libyan local authorities as observers in its statutory meetings and events.

²

<http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/arlem/Pages/Libya-and-the-Committee-of-the-Regions.aspx>

³

The Assembly of European Regions (AER), the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), Arco Latino, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR), the Standing Committee for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership of Local and Regional Authorities (COPPEM), MedCities, and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).

The excellent cooperation with the UfM⁴ will allow ARLEM to bring the territorial aspect to the different policies of the UfM in 2018-2019.

ARLEM will pursue its cooperation with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in the current mandate and extend its cooperation with the European Economic and Social Committee in fields where synergies between LRAs and civil society organisations bring most benefits. Both partners hold observer status within ARLEM.

ARLEM is open to continuing its collaboration with the European Training Foundation (ETF)⁵ and the European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA). ARLEM will also reach out to the European Investment Bank (EIB) and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in the context of the programmes and financing opportunities available to Mediterranean partner countries and their LRAs in particular, with a view to developing an updated overview of funding opportunities.

4. THE OPERATIONAL DIMENSION

- Every year, not more than two thematic reports will be drawn up (with input from a 20-page CoR study), with an equal number of rapporteurs from the EU and from the Mediterranean partners' groups.
- In line with the Declaration of Understanding signed with the secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean in 2013, ARLEM will continue to actively participate in the UfM's activities.
- A topic can be addressed at meetings, ranging from a debate within a statutory ARLEM meeting to a specific seminar, workshop, conference or study visit that the Assembly can organise, or within the context of the European Week of Regions and Cities. ARLEM members will contribute to the sixth edition of the *Assises de la Coopération Décentralisée – Regions and Cities for Development* to be co-organised in Brussels by the European Commission and the European Committee of the Regions in 2019.
- Statutory meetings provide an opportunity for members involved in particular fields to report back to the Assembly or its Bureau.
- Specific topics might best be addressed by studies, pending CoR budgetary availability. For each of the two thematic ARLEM reports every year, the CoR intends to provide thematic support to the rapporteur by commissioning a 20-page study. Furthermore, an updated version of the 2012 brochure on "The EU funds available for Local and Regional Authorities from the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries: information guide" will be produced by the CoR in the course of 2018, in order to provide southern and eastern Mediterranean partner countries with user-friendly information on the EU funds available for local and regional authorities.
- ARLEM can also offer its members access to information by supporting and developing different online tools such as the information on the division of powers between several levels of government in the EU and Mediterranean partner countries on the CoR's website⁶. Through the European Portal of Decentralised Cooperation, the CoR and the European Commission

⁴ Declaration of Intent between ARLEM and the UfM Secretariat signed in 2013.

⁵ Declaration of Intent between ARLEM and the ETF signed in 2013.

⁶ <http://cor.europa.eu/divisionofpowers>

together provide a tool mapping existing cooperation activities and facilitating contacts between LRAs who are looking for partners⁷.

- Cooperation with other partners is sought in all activities and the Assembly is open to proposals from its partners.

5. **TIMETABLE OF ARLEM RELATED ACTIVITIES AND PROPOSALS FOR ACTION 2018-2019**

This timetable is a living document. It lists regular events and proposals by ARLEM members, partners and stakeholders, as approved by ARLEM co-chairs. Additional suggestions and proposals by ARLEM members, partners and stakeholders are welcome and will be incorporated based on the approval of ARLEM co-chairs. The timetable will be updated in the course of the reference period.

The ARLEM plenary session in general meets once a year. The ARLEM Bureau meets at least once a year, on the occasion of the plenary session; additional meetings may be held in the period between two plenary sessions. ARLEM's commission for sustainable territorial development meets once a year. The meetings could be held in Brussels or (upon invitation) in the partner or EU countries.

2018

20-21 February, Giza (Egypt)

- 9th ARLEM plenary session, preceded by coordination meetings and 20th ARLEM Bureau meeting
- Adoption of the draft ARLEM reports on "Women's empowerment in the Mediterranean region" (rapporteur: Mary Freehill, IE/PES) and on "The role of the sub-national authorities from the Mediterranean region in addressing radicalisation and violent extremism of young people" (rapporteur: Mohamed Kamal El Daly, Governor of Giza, Egypt)
- Adoption of the 2018-2019 Action plan and of political recommendations for 2018

Date and venue tbc

- UfM ministerial meeting on industrial cooperation
- tbc: UfM ministerial conference on transport
- tbc: UfM ministerial conference on regional cooperation

September/October

- **(date and venue tbc) 21st ARLEM Bureau meeting back to back with the 4th meeting of ARLEM's Commission for sustainable territorial development**
- **8-11 October, Brussels:** ARLEM members participating in the European Week of Regions and Cities, potential workshop on Solidarity tourism, cultural heritage and living together
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- Publication of updated guide on EU funding opportunities available to local and regional authorities from Mediterranean partner countries

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<http://cor.europa.eu/portal>

Throughout the year

- Follow-up - Nicosia initiative
- UfM SOMs/ ad hoc SOMs: Follow-up and participation of ARLEM secretariat as appropriate

2019

February (date and venue tbc)

- 10th ARLEM plenary session, preceded by coordination meetings and 22th ARLEM Bureau meeting
- Adoption of the draft ARLEM reports
- Adoption of political recommendations for 2019

Date tbc, Brussels

- Participation of ARLEM members in the 6th edition of the *Assises de la coopération décentralisée – Regions and Cities for Development*, co-organised by CoR and EC

Date and venue tbc

- 23rd ARLEM Bureau meeting, potentially back-to-back with 5th meeting of ARLEM's Commission for sustainable territorial development
- UfM ministerial meeting on employment and labour
- UfM ministerial meeting on environment and climate change
- tbc: UfM ministerial meeting on energy
- tbc: first UfM ministerial meeting on tourism

October

- ARLEM members participating in the European Week of Regions and Cities

Throughout the year

- Follow-up Nicosia initiative
- UfM SOMs/ ad hoc SOMs: Follow-up and participation of ARLEM secretariat as appropriate

N.B. Appendix overleaf.

APPENDIX

ARLEM Reports and Position Papers 2010-2017

Report Title	Rapporteur
Policy field: Energy, environment and climate change	
Local water management in the Mediterranean (2010)	Ramon Luis Valcarel Siso (Murcia/ES) (SUDEV) ⁸
The promotion of renewable energies: a factor for economic and social co-development in the Mediterranean region (2011)	Michel Lebrun (Wallonia/BE) (SUDEV)
The link between desertification and climate change in the Mediterranean (2011)	Nichi Vendola (Puglia/IT) (SUDEV)
Waste management at local and regional level in the Mediterranean region (2014)	Mohammed Boudra (Taza-Al Hoceima-Taounate/MA) (SUDEV)
Energy and climate change (2016)	Mohamed Sadiki (Rabat/MA)
Policy field: Mobility, migration and integration	
Position paper on the role of women (2013)	
The role of local and regional authorities in managing migration in the Mediterranean (2014)	António Costa (Lisbon/PT) (ECOTER)
List of good practices on integration (2015)	
Employment and territorial development in the Mediterranean (2015)	Eleni Loucaidou (Nicosia/CY)
Women's empowerment in the Mediterranean region (2017)	Mary Freehill (Dublin/PES)
The role of the sub-national authorities from the Mediterranean region in addressing radicalisation and violent extremism of young people (2017)	Mohamed Kamal El Daly (Giza/EG)
Policy field: Urban and socio-economic development, cultural issues	
Urban development in the Mediterranean (2011)	Khalid Al Hnaifat (Greater Tafilah/JO) (ECOTER)
The role of small and medium-sized enterprises in the Mediterranean (2011)	Fathallah Oualalou(Rabat/MA) (ECOTER)
The preservation and enhancement of cultural heritage in the Mediterranean (2011)	Asim Güzelbey (Gaziantep/TR) (ECOTER)
Sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean (2012)	Michèle Sabban (Assembly of European Regions) (SUDEV)
Technical Education and Vocational Training in the Mediterranean (2012)	Peter Bossman (Piran/SI) (ECOTER)
Sustainable urban mobility in the Mediterranean (2013)	Karim Bennour (Algiers/DZ) (SUDEV)
A sustainable urban agenda in the Mediterranean (2015)	Fawzi Masad (Amman/JO)

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The former ARLEM commissions for sustainable development (SUDEV) and Economic, Social and Territorial Affairs (ECOTER) were merged as of 2015.

Policy field: External affairs and cooperation	
Position paper on the ENP (2015)	
Cross border cooperation (2016)	Francesco Pigliaru (Sardinia/IT)
A cohesion policy for the Mediterranean region (2013)	Joana Ortega i Alemany (CRPM, Catalonia/ES) (ECOTER)