



## **EURO-MEDITERRANEAN REGIONAL AND LOCAL ASSEMBLY**

### **Recommendations for 2019**

*Adopted at the 10th ARLEM Plenary session on 27 February 2019 in Seville, Spain*

Political and economic stabilisation in the Mediterranean region is a key priority for the Union for the Mediterranean, the European Union and the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM). Political challenges include ensuring effective democratic governance, developing the rule of law and ensuring respect for human rights. In the perspective of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals which lie at its core, the active commitment and the concrete contributions of regions and cities are needed to end poverty, protect the planet from degradation, ensure prosperous and fulfilling lives and foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

Bringing together local and regional authorities (LRAs) from the three shores of the Mediterranean in a joint assembly, ARLEM's role is to promote a multilevel approach in the European neighbourhood policy (ENP) and the territorialisation of the Euro-Mediterranean sectoral policies, bringing them closer to the people, and providing support for decentralisation, stressing the link between political decentralisation and territorial development.

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) can support the cooperation between the EU and its southern neighbouring partners. Furthermore, the UfM has proved to be a valuable forum for political and economic discussion, providing a framework for cooperation on issues of common interest in the region. ARLEM can support the cooperation between the EU and its southern neighbouring partners on a local and regional level.

### **ARLEM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2019**

#### **Migration**

1. ARLEM maintains that international migration, if properly managed, can contribute to the socioeconomic development and recommends closer coordination between different levels of governance (local, national and international), including civil society organisations. As ARLEM

countries on the three shores of the Mediterranean are simultaneously, to different degrees, countries of origin, transit and destination, their local authorities shall be helped in managing both imminent emergencies and medium- to long term integration. Local and regional authorities aim to ensure overall well-being in their territories through inclusive public policies directed towards all inhabitants, especially the most vulnerable including migrants.

2. ARLEM recommends that LRAs are given a greater say when immigration, asylum and integration policies are drawn up, and that LRAs in the Euromed region develop networks and instruments for cooperation and sharing best practices on various aspects of migration management (integration, social inclusion, employment, refugee protection, prevention of irregular migration, voluntary return programmes, etc.) and have direct access to funds.
3. The importance of the policies aimed at "*circular migration*" should be better underlined. In addition, effective and sustainable return policies, which fully respect the rights of migrants and destination countries, should be promoted.

#### Political future and better governance

4. Following the adoption of the report on "*governance and transparency in the Mediterranean region*"<sup>1</sup> ARLEM calls for more decentralisation in the region because it can address the issue of large-scale distrust in the government. Transparency is easier to achieve at a local level, close to the citizens, and projects at this level are more visible for the local community. With local level empowerment, citizens can become involved in the deliberative processes, while public officials can be held accountable for the end results and benefits of their actions.
5. For local authorities to be able to make a meaningful difference, local budgets should be increased, encouraging the development of fiscal collection capacity from investments and development projects, and asserting ownership over the quality of goods and services provided.
6. ARLEM stresses the importance of territorial development and capacity building of local authorities, with the "Nicosia Initiative" as an example of decentralised cooperation building up partnership with a bottom-up approach.

#### Sustainable economic development

7. As stated in the report on "*youth entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean*"<sup>2</sup>, job creation is a pressing priority in the Euro-Mediterranean region. In North Africa for instance, youth unemployment reached almost 30% in 2017, more than double the world average. ARLEM calls on intergovernmental organisations, in particular the EU, the UfM and the UN to recognise youth entrepreneurship as a key factor in economic development in the Mediterranean region.

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<sup>1</sup> COR-2018-04255-00-01-TCD-TRA, rapporteur Lütüf Savas, Mayor of Hatay, Turkey

<sup>2</sup> cor-2018-04123-01-02-tcd-tra-en, rapporteur Olgierd Geblewicz, president of Westpomerania Region, Poland

8. With the ARLEM Award: Young local entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean, the assembly contributes to showcase a successful example of young entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean region as an inspiration to others, demonstrate the positive impact that local and regional authorities in Mediterranean partner countries can have on the entrepreneurial ecosystem and highlight how young entrepreneurs in Mediterranean partner countries actively take the future in their hands and create jobs for local economic development, thus establishing a positive narrative.
  9. ARLEM calls on the Mediterranean region's central governments to involve local authorities more in development of business friendly strategies and to develop smart specialisation strategies to help create synergies in key areas for local and regional development.
  10. ARLEM recommends promoting the role and participation of women in the labour market and supporting legislative reforms on female entrepreneurship development. A particular attention should be paid to social and family legislations.
  11. Concerning the envisaged merger of several EU external action instruments into the proposed Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) in the EU's next long-term budget period (MFF 2021-2027), ARLEM underlines that a long-term perspective and predictability have to be maintained in the EU cooperation with its Mediterranean partner countries, including at the sub-national level. In particular, the EU assistance to and cooperation with LRAs from Mediterranean partner countries must not suffer in financial or organisational way as a result of increased flexibility in allocation of financial and other resources between the various geographic and thematic programmes. To ensure this, ARLEM requests that a specific programme with an adequate budget directly allocated to projects for regional and local authorities be included under the thematic pillar of the instrument.
  12. Increased economic integration must be pursued as an enormous lever to better harness the potential of the Mediterranean region. To this end, the further spread and development of useful tools such as cross-border cooperation programmes and the European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation would provide a positive perspective.
  13. ARLEM recommends that cities and regions in the Mediterranean region further commit to enhanced action on climate, notably through the Global Covenant of Mayors, to which ARLEM expresses its full support.
  14. ARLEM will continue to participate to the works of the UfM Regional Platform on Sustainable Urban Development.
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