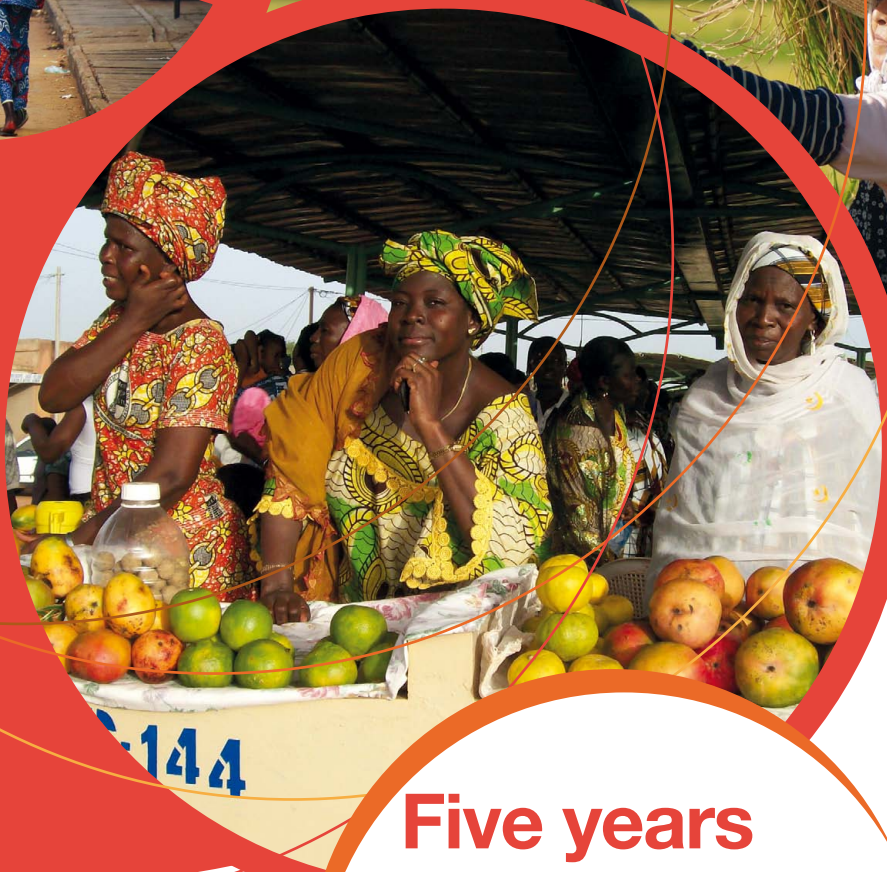

Five years of action!

PLATFORMA

The European voice of **Local** and **Regional** authorities for development

Editorial

The construction of a peaceful and united Europe has been one of the main driving forces behind the actions of European local and regional governments on the international stage for many years. They have never shied away from this project but their ambitions in this regard have evolved as a result of geopolitical upheavals which have shaped the world.

"Improving the delivery of essential services close to the citizens through our partnerships"

Conscious of their responsibilities in the fight against inequalities on a global scale, European local and regional elected representatives have raised the awareness of their fellow citizens regarding the challenges development entails and have pushed their local or regional authorities to become active in partnerships of cooperation with their counterparts from every continent.

New urbanisation plans, better water treatment systems and more efficient hospital services have resulted from this type of collaboration. Often much more than mere projects, shared values and a joint approach to public action and governance are what make up the heart of these partnerships.

As policy makers for the local and regional levels, we realise each and every day that citizens' needs are best met with the most suitable responses when these have been proposed by elected representatives on the ground, closest to their populations.

"Putting our skills to work in pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals"

It is this vision which inspired local and regional governments to join forces on the Millennium Development Goals alongside the United Nations and the European Union, and which will further fuel our determination to reach new sustainable development objectives after 2015.

Encouraged by greater recognition of our action, guided by the pressing need to do even more and better, our

cooperation activities now meet professional standards and we have greatly stepped up our coordination efforts.

"Using a single voice to present our vision and commitments to the European institutions"

It is this spirit which stood out during the creation of PLATFORMA, the European platform of local and regional authorities and their associations active in development.

Since 2008, through PLATFORMA, we have broadcast the voice of European local and regional authorities in order to secure EU support for decentralised cooperation and assistance towards the development of democratically elected local institutions in the partner countries.

We would like to summarise in this brochure the work that has been accomplished since the creation of the network as well as give examples of collaborative projects which reflect the diversity and the impact of the cooperation actions of local and regional authorities and their associations.

In this way, we hope to help strengthen even further the commitment of European local and regional authorities to development and shine a spotlight on PLATFORMA's action.

Pierre Schapira

Deputy Mayor of the City of Paris

in charge of International Relations, European Affairs and Francophonie

Political Representative of PLATFORMA

Carles Llorens

Director General of Development Cooperation

Region of Catalonia

Political Representative of PLATFORMA

Why PLATFORMA?

In 2007, the European Parliament and the European Commission recognised the role of local and regional government in development; in the case of the Parliament, through the adoption of Pierre Schapira's report on local authorities and development cooperation, and for the Commission, by launching the programme "Non-State Actors – Local Authorities" (NSA-LA).

The major European, international and national associations of local and regional authorities therefore decided to unite under one sole network in order to influence European development policy using a single voice.

Since 2008, PLATFORMA has made this voice heard within the institutions of the European Union (EU).

PLATFORMA is financed by the European Commission, through the NSA-LA programme.

"In an area characterised by the strong mobilisation of civil society organisations, we wanted to move the European institutions' views forward so as to ensure that development policies would make greater use of the expertise of local and regional authorities."

Wolfgang Schuster,
former mayor of Stuttgart, President of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions which hosts the PLATFORMA Secretariat.

Our objectives, our results

1. "Present a common message to the European Institutions"

PLATFORMA mobilises the expertise of its member networks and propels the European debates forward with respect to the principal challenges of development. More than fifteen positions have been drawn up to inform the institutions' debates.

From March 2010 until May 2011, PLATFORMA distinguishes itself as one of the protagonists of the structured dialogue between the European institutions, the civil society organisations (CSO) and local and regional authorities (LRA). It is the first time that the institutions have opened a dialogue with LRAs on their role in development cooperation. This reflection has resulted in a new European strategy dubbed *An agenda for change*, in which the EU calls for a strengthening of the partnership with local and regional authorities.

Most recently, PLATFORMA has been working with Members of the European Parliament on the budget guidelines for the 2014-2020 period. The network has been seeking to consolidate the Parliament's support for the international activities of local and regional authorities and for the development of local democracy in the partner countries.

2. "Strengthen local and regional authorities' participation in development programmes"

PLATFORMA is leading information campaigns amongst local and regional authorities on the NSA-LA programme and works with the Commission to improve the conditions for programme access.

In 2009, after questioned about it by PLATFORMA, the European Commission modified the programme's call for proposals. The new modalities now have conditions that are more favourable to the applications of local and regional authorities.

In just five years, from Frankfurt to Zaragoza to Bergen and even Turin, PLATFORMA has already helped more than 750 elected representatives and local and regional agents to be well-informed when it comes to cooperation programmes and European funding opportunities available.

3. "Facilitate the exchange of experience"

By organising ten or so conferences and workshops which brought together more than 900 people, PLATFORMA has given many local and regional elected representatives the chance to form new ties and to share any lessons learned from their experiences with cooperation.

In March 2010, in Bucharest, a hundred participants were able to take part in a debate on different approaches to cooperation and the role of local and regional authorities in development education in the States which became members after 2004.

4. "Strengthen links with civil society"

PLATFORMA holds regular exchanges with civil society platforms in order to further develop common points of agreement on important issues.

In April 2012, the CSO-LRA partnerships were at the centre of the debates held at PLATFORMA's annual Forum. Representatives of NGOs, foundations and migrant networks came together to discuss with elected representatives how the actions of each of the actors are complementary.

A credible interlocutor, legitimate representative of European LRA

In the past five years, PLATFORMA has distinguished itself as a credible interlocutor vis-a-vis the European Commission and as a legitimate representative for local and regional governments, capable of putting together an important network of elected representatives from all subnational levels of government, in Europe and in the partner countries.

In 2011, the Commissioner for Development pledged to redefine the European strategy of support for local and regional authorities in the partner countries. Several months later, PLATFORMA and its members were piloting a four-month consultation on the future strategy, mobilising 350 elected representatives and experts on cooperation from every continent.

Until 2015 PLATFORMA will be working in collaboration with the Commission, continuing the experience of the structured dialogue held directly with local and regional governments in developing countries. PLATFORMA will thus be actively involved, working alongside its global networks to create greater synergy between the needs of local and regional authorities from the partner countries and the development policies defined in Brussels.

Contribution of local and regional governments to development: supporting evidence.

City of Ouagadougou,
via the Non-State Actors– Local Authorities programme

Development for citizens by the citizens.

Like most of the old districts in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), the Gounghin neighbourhoods can be characterised by their outdated public infrastructures: dilapidated classrooms, inadequate healthcare centres unable to receive patients under satisfactory conditions, poorly lit streets, etc.

It is also an area of considerable business activity. Sellers lay out their fruit and vegetables on the ground itself and take over the sides of the road, a cause of many accidents.

The city of Ouagadougou asked for European financial support through the Non-State Actors – Local Authorities (NSA-LA) programme to start a project which puts citizens at the heart of the process to rehabilitate and develop their neighbourhoods.

The city worked with the Gounghin Unified Neighbourhood Council, an entity which groups together local associations. The Council was thus able to scout out and participate in the construction of a market, the renovation of four healthcare centres and six primary schools and the redesign of two green spaces. Moreover, providing adequate lighting for twelve streets helped improve the safety of residents.

To ensure a better utilisation of the facilities intended for the citizens, the city of Ouagadougou delegated the management of the infrastructures to the Unified Neighbourhood Council.

Thus, by strengthening the coordination among the local elected representatives and their fellow citizens, this approach resulted in lasting improvements of the living conditions of the 50,000 inhabitants of Gounghin.

This project is one of the first NSA-LA projects managed by a local authority from a developing country.

Source: City of Ouagadougou and International Association of Francophone Mayors

Turin, Tours, Bilbao and Riga / Slow Food

via the Non State Actors – Local Authorities programme

Promoting responsible production and consumption methods.

Slow Food is an association gathering producers, distributors and consumers around a philosophy placing product quality at the centre of our relationship to food. A cooperation model was created on the basis of this philosophy: promoting production and consumption methods which combine local socio-economic development, respect for traditions and the protection of ecosystems.

The project 4Cities4Dev associates four European cities and seven Slow Food communities (a group of people operating in the agro-food sector on a given territory).

Turin (Italy), project leader, Tours (France), Bilbao (Spain) and Riga (Latvia) support communities in Madagascar, Senegal, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Ethiopia and the Ivory Coast in order to protect local products and production methods.

The four European partners also intend to use this occasion to raise awareness among European citizens concerning the consequences of their nutrition choices on the ecologic and economic world balance.

Moreover, 4Cities4Dev allows Slow Food to evaluate the efficiency of its cooperation model with the support of a research team from the University of Turin.

Source: City of Turin

Programme Non State Actors – Local authorities

Since 2007, the programme has financed 480 projects implemented by local and regional authorities from Europe and from partner countries.

Thus, through NSA-LA, the European Commission has so far made available 171.7 million euro in co-financing for development projects coordinated by local and regional governments.

Edegem / San Jeronimo

Building the capacities of a local government to set up the conditions necessary for sustainable development.

San Jeronimo is a municipality in the Andes mountain range located around ten kilometres away from Cuzco in Peru. Edegem is a small city on the outskirts of Antwerp in Belgium.

In 2004, they signed a partnership agreement. This document called for support for the Peruvian town's local administration in the areas of water, health and culture. Very quickly, the municipality sought the support of its European partner in other sectors as well.

An approach which is based on human ties

The success of this cooperation relied on the personal ties built up between the local agents from Edegem and San Jeronimo. The two teams held weekly exchanges and met up regularly for study visits, job shadowing and training events. The municipal services of Edegem lent their expertise and built up the capacity of their Peruvian colleagues so that the latter would then be able to set up their own projects independently.

Mutual enrichment

This partnership represents a gateway to the world for the community of Edegem. Once a year, the inhabitants of San Jeronimo get together for the linderaje, a term which literally means "at the border", and walk to the edge of their town to celebrate the territory which unites them.

Inspired by this tradition, Edegem now organises an annual linderaje across its territory. This community walk, which has met with huge success, also lets a new population become aware of the challenges of cooperation and development.

Vinocanchón, nerve centre of the local economy

Everyday, more than 1,400 merchants display their wares at the Vinocanchón market which represents the driving force of the local economy.

In recent years, the market has expanded considerably, much quicker than the town of San Jeronimo could anticipate. The resulting deterioration in the market, especially the excess waste, gave rise to fears of eventual economic, social and environmental problems.

An NGO had previously worked on modernising the market infrastructure and improving conditions of hygiene but due to a lack of sufficient capacity, the local administration was unable to continue these initiatives.

Edegem therefore helped San Jeronimo to set up a new structure within the municipal administration to manage the market. Once the structure was established, the two partners drew up a management plan and activities to improve hygienic conditions.

After a study visit to Edegem, personnel from San Jeronimo set up an on-site area for the composting of organic waste. The municipality installed different coloured bins and raised the merchants' awareness of the importance of sorting waste.

As a result, three tons of organic waste, sorted and collected at the market, are processed everyday at the municipal composting site. The resulting compost heap is used for the upkeep of the municipality's parks.

Following the positive outcome of this experiment, the municipality extended its plan to the entire town and created a municipal service to ensure its proper implementation as well as to handle environmental issues.

Source: Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities

Burundi / Pays de la Loire

Promote synergy among the territorial actors in order to maximise the impact of any actions.

Located in the "Great Lakes" region, Burundi has a population of more than nine million people spread out over a vast territory of 28,000 square kilometres, an area slightly smaller than the Pays de la Loire region in France (32,000 km^2).

After the civil war which devastated the country from 1993 to 2005, the Pays de la Loire region undertook to help Burundi on its path towards reconciliation and democracy.

A multi-level partnership

This partnership is rather unusual, as it involves a link between a regional authority and a State. It outlines action priorities programmed for several years in many sectors. In this way, the region intends to support the government as it establishes public policy and develops local services.

The partnership between the Pays de la Loire and Burundi also acts as a facilitator between the donors and international partners, including notably the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, which supports this cooperation.

A multi-actor partnership

NGOs, higher education and academic institutions, local authorities, chambers of commerce, associations, a large number of Burundians and just as many people from the Pays de la Loire, all work together to carry out around forty projects. Through its representative Office in Bujumbura, the Region plays an essential role in supporting the State by identifying, mobilising and coordinating the hundred-odd partners involved in this cooperation.

Improving food safety by strengthening the fisheries sector

Burundi's economy essentially relies on agriculture, animal husbandry and fishing, sectors which employ more than 94% of the national labour force. Even so, the nutritional needs of the population are far from being satisfied.

Lake Tanganyika, where the fishing is, is a source of livelihood for more than 100,000 people. However, the lack of any system for preserving fish after they are caught forces the fishermen to sell them at a loss and also results in a loss of the nutritional qualities of the fish.

At the request of the government, the French Region therefore worked with the Directorate of Water, Fishery and Fish Farming of the Ministry of Environment (DEPP) to strengthen the fisheries sector.

The setting up of a machine to produce ice and the creation of isotherm cooling units using local materials, as well as the construction of three storage buildings and four fishmongers' led to considerable improvements in how the fish distribution chain worked.

With support from the Chamber of Agriculture of the Pays de la Loire, a consortium grouping together fishermen's associations, suppliers, merchants and the DEPP, spearheaded the project.

The DEPP played a crucial role in training and providing the fishermen's and merchants' associations with information concerning good practices in the areas of hygiene, fish preservation and conservation and managing a fish shop.

The project thus made it possible for the whole country to be kept supplied in fresh, good-quality fish, increased fishing revenues and set up professional standards in the sales chain for fish.

Source: Pays de la Loire region

Reconstruction in Haiti

Five partners coordinate to give local authorities control over the development of their territory.

Following the earthquake which devastated part of the country, the Ministry of the Interior and Local and Regional Government (MILRG) and several local Haitian representatives sought funding from the international community for the reconstruction of the region of Palmes.

Since 2010, VNG International (the International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities), Cités Unies France (CUF), the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), the Union of Quebec Municipalities (UMQ) and the city of Montreal have worked together on several projects with local and regional authorities from this region.

The objective has been to allow local authorities to become (once again) the catalysts for the economic development of their territory by restoring the operations of the institutions as well as the administration's technical capabilities.

The Canadian partners have been focusing on dealing with questions linked to spatial planning and the restoration of municipalities' contracting ability. CUF and VNG International have been working on capacity building in terms of delivering essential services. The partners have also been concentrating on governance by improving transparency and the dialogue with the population.

The five partners have worked in close coordination with MILRG so that their experiences could benefit other Haitian local authorities.

Local and regional government thus strengthened will then be able to successfully carry out their mission vis-a-vis their citizens, and could take up their role again as interlocutor with the central government and regain their ability to coordinate the many NGOs developing projects on their territory.

Sources: Cités Unies France, VNG International and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities

PLATFORMA is made up of 24 members:

European and international networks,
national associations of local and regional authorities and
individual cities and regions actively involved in development cooperation.

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