

Structured Dialogue - Working group I

The roles and added-value of CSOs and LAs in EC external cooperation

Central theme I: roles and added-value of CSOs and LAs in development

PLATFORMA position paper

PLATFORMA, representing the voice of European local and regional authorities (LRA) active in development cooperation, welcomes the structured dialogue, and the possibility to discuss the present and possible future involvement of CSO and LRA in the EC external action.

PLATFORMA is composed of:

- Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), with over 50 member national associations from 38 countries
- United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), with 112 member national associations and more than 1000 cities as direct members, from 136 countries in total
- Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), with 161 member regions
- Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) with 90 member border regions
- Assembly of European Regions (AER) with 270 member regions
- International Association of French-Speaking Mayors (AIMF), with 203 members in 48 countries
- Spanish Federation of Municipalities et Provinces (FEMP)
- CEMR French Section (AFCCRE)
- Central Union of Municipalities and Communities of Greece (KEDKE)
- CEMR Italian Section (AICCRE)
- Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG)
- National Association of Portuguese Municipalities (ANMP)
- Romanian Municipalities Association (AMR)
- Local Government Association (LGA)
- Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR)
- Cités Unies France (CUF)
- City of Lyon
- City of Paris
- City of Bucharest (district 2)

As an introduction, PLATFORMA members, who contributed to this position paper, would like to highlight the diversity of the development cooperation context, particularly evolving in time of economic downturn, as well as the diversity of the local and regional authorities' roles, competences and added values in development cooperation.

Along with multilateral donors and States, LRA and CSO are key development actors with a wide and long cooperation experience with their counterparts in developing countries.

Contrary to the vocabulary used in the structured dialogue's working papers (p8 "LA are supposed to bring added value"; "their potential role in local development"), we would like to stress that since decades local and regional authorities have played an essential role in development cooperation, notably in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. During the Millennium Summit +5 in September 2005 in New York, the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan explicitly acknowledged the role of local and regional governments in achieving the MDGs. LRAs, being the sphere of government closest to people, have a key role to play in ensuring access to basic services for their inhabitants and are in the best position to answer to the citizen's needs. In countries where decentralisation is enforced, they are established by law, result from free local elections, and represent the legitimate key development actor at the local and regional level.

We are happy that at the level of the European institutions, their role has now been recognised as essential partners for development, notably through the following tools:

- The Cotonou Agreement (revised in 2005, with a new revision to be adopted in June) recognises local governments as key development actors, and has opened a range of new opportunities to support democratic decentralisation processes (Article 33) and the recognition of decentralised cooperation (Articles 70-71).
- Following the adoption in 2007 by the European Parliament of the report drafted by Pierre Schapira on "local authorities and development cooperation", a new thematic instrument was created in order to support the actions of non state actors and local authorities in development. The role of local authorities was reaffirmed in 2008 in the EC communication on "local authorities, actors for development" and in the corresponding Council conclusions on "local authorities as actors for development, working to reduce poverty", which resulted in the first edition of the Assises of Decentralised cooperation in December 2009.

According to PLATFORMA, the primary question is to define the specific roles and added value of LRA in development cooperation, and thereafter, highlight the relevant complementarities with CSO (see question 1).

As set in the table proposed in the "Agenda and Methodology" document for the working group, the 7 main categories of roles of development actors are adapted to CSO roles but do not take fully into account LRA roles. Thus we would like to stress the following roles for LRA:

1- Formal democratic government and political accountability

Deriving from free democratic elections (which is a condition for the completion of their democratic mandate), local and regional governments have the political legitimacy to be the key development actors at the corresponding levels. They are established by law, and therefore have full authority and legitimacy.

Because of this mandate, LRA are responsible for defining and implementing local/regional development strategies, including planning and delivering basic

services, contrary to what is stated in the working papers (p 8: “LRA have a comparative advantage in implementing local/regional development strategies”).

They have legal competences for delivering and managing services and they are accountable for such responsibilities to the citizens they serve and to the central government. As such, they are also accountable to the civil society itself.

LRA are therefore to be understood as a full sphere of formal democratic government, distinct from civil society.

They are founding pillars of local democracy and local governance (“involving a shift from an only vertical accountability dimension to a horizontal and downward accountability, connected with principles of participation, transparency and accountability, in which civil society plays a crucial role”, see EC, Local Authorities: actors for development, SEC (2008) 2570).

2- Local/regional and Multilevel governance

LRA role results from decentralisation processes and the recognition of the subsidiarity principle. LRA foster dialogue between different tiers of government, ensuring coherence between national, regional and local policy development and empowering civil society with a view to its active participation in the processes of planning. This role is crucial to introduce a shift in aid effectiveness paradigm, for a broader territorial and downward ownership of development strategies.

In partner countries where such political and legal responsibilities are acknowledged, LRA have an advocacy role to play to ensure that decentralisation is effective at the political administrative and fiscal levels, and to mainstream democratic governance at the local and regional level. Unfortunately they often lack the capacities and resources to fully implement their local/regional policies and deliver quality services to the population as well as play their watchdog role with central governments.

Such challenges are addressed by decentralised cooperation projects, which mainly focus on capacity building of partner authorities in fields which range from support to local governance, urban and territorial planning to basic public services delivery among others.

Decentralised cooperation is also mainly recognised for its added value in meeting institutional challenges, and implementing capacity and institutional building at local/regional level, as well as promoting decentralisation in partner countries.

Hence LRA have a key added-value in promoting multilevel governance and decentralisation as a key component of the EU development strategies with partner countries. Furthermore the subsidiarity principle has been a guiding line for building the European governance and could therefore be adapted in partner countries for ensuring territorial cohesion and democratic ownership.

National LRA associations have a key role to play in their dialogue with the central government to keep it in check and enhance decentralisation. Building capacity of such associations has long been a key area of cooperation with European national LRA associations.

The London Borough of Lewisham, United Kingdom, and the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, South Africa

Since a friendship agreement between Ekurhuleni and Lewisham was signed in 2002, they have embarked on a varied programme of exchange of best practise on areas covering economic development, accessible services, customer care, governance, human resources and youth engagement.

This partnership highlights the opportunity to scaling up good practice into regional and national policy change. Their exchange on local economic development had mutual benefits to both partners and resulted in a change of policy by Gauteng and then the South African government on the idea of a 'job brokerage' system.

3- Coordinating actors at local/regional level

As the formal government closest to citizens, LRA are the best positioned actors to make the principle of coordination operational at local/regional level.

In developing countries, LRA are in a position to catalyze cooperation among different types of actors at the local and regional level. When elaborating strategic long term development plans, promoting economic development and initiating public-private partnerships, they bring together the various stakeholders such as the private sector, civil society, central government and international development partners. Due to their proximity and territorial presence, as well as knowledge of local needs and expertise in traditional sectors, they participate in maximising the effects of development assistance by bilateral and multilateral donor institutions. This intermediate position in the multi stakeholders' framework is reflected by the "territorial approach of development" which is widely promoted by local/regional governments.

The Region of Cataluña

Cataluña provides one example of this strategic and coordinating role of the Regions.

The action of the region is based on a pluri-annual cooperation strategy which includes internal and external actors of the territory. The regional development plan covers the following areas: providing funds, organising the region's own cooperation projects and coordinating the actions of the other stakeholders involved in the region, such as NGOs, universities, municipalities and private actors.

Therefore, the regional action goes well beyond project implementation, it mobilizes the relevant actors, lead education and awareness raising actions and lead the political dialogue on cooperation.

Greater development effectiveness in a long-term perspective implies that all development initiatives from the various stakeholders involved at local/regional level including NSA, be included in a development plan established at the corresponding level. This calls for such strategies to be based on prior consultations of all involved stakeholders at the design stage.

Example of a multi-actor approach : The Urban Local Development Program (ULDP)

Where : France, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Mali and Senegal

Who : LRAs, NGOs involved in basic services, South CSOs

What : coordinate and capitalize experiences, elaborate joint actions

14 French cities, with their partners in Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Mali and Senegal have established an urban local development program (ULDP). The aim is to coordinate and confront experiences to improve living conditions. The ULDP has been implemented by Cités Unies France, GRET and Enda-Ecopop (French and Senegalese NGO). It received a cross-financing from the EU and the French government. As an example, the cooperation between Maurepas (France) and Mopti (Mali), which focus on water and sanitation, and includes training was integrated in the ULDP.

Working method :

- collaboration on basic services delivery where LRAs and NGOs (used to work in an urban environment) work together, bringing in their specific know-how and their capital of confidence
- Involvement of local CSOs (debate, seminar...)

Results :

- Building dialogue in towns and cities between LRA and CSOs through new tools; for example, one of the municipalities created a call for proposals for local CSOs fostering a real working relationship and enabling local politicians and civil society to work in trust.
- concrete examples of improved living conditions in the African towns and cities

Why does it work?

- ULDP was elaborated upstream with all the stakeholders
- Funding came from all the stakeholders (LRAs and NGOs)
- Real involvement of partners from the south

4- Mobilising grass-root communities and raising awareness

Local and regional elections represent key moments for public mobilisation and assessment of agreed policies at the earlier elections. Elections bring decision-making closer to the people affected by such decisions, and keep LRA close to the grass-root communities and their needs.

The mayor is for instance the closest authority that the communities would approach for their requests, projects and problems.

In relation with their public closeness with the citizens, LRA play a key role in raising their awareness as the political level responsible for primary and secondary education in many countries, as well as catalysts of the CSO at territorial level.

5- LRA: cooperation actors and donors

In Europe and other industrialised regions, LRA have the capacity to engage as donors for development cooperation, and have done so for decades, funding their own development projects as well as a number of CSO projects.

However, decentralised cooperation as managed between elected officials is the main model. In some countries (UK, Sweden for instance), LRA do not have the legal capacity to engage funds into development cooperation activities and thus focus their action on building capacities and sharing expertise with Southern counterparts.

As set in the working papers, the QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE are the following:

- 1- What areas of **complementarity** and **coordination** amongst different families of CSOs and amongst CSOs & LAs can be identified throughout the EU cooperation cycle?
- 2- What **mechanisms** can CSOs & LAs themselves develop to ensure complementarity? What specific role can be played by European CSOs & LAs? (are there successful examples?)
- 3- What mechanisms should be developed **at country level** by the EC & MS to gain a better **joint understanding of the distinct roles, added value and complementarities of the various CSOs & LAs?** (are there successful examples?)
- 4- How to **enhance the overall efficiency and coherence of the engagement strategy** with CSOs & LAs considering the diversity of actors involved?

1. What areas of complementarity and coordination amongst different families of CSOs and amongst CSOs & LAs can be identified throughout the EU cooperation cycle?

There is a wide diversity within the LRA family, going from urban or rural municipalities to provinces and regions. Their competencies vary according to the administrative level as well as the countries. In addition, national associations of LRA play an important role in development cooperation as well as their counterparts in developing countries.

Regarding the EU cooperation cycle (programming, identification, formulation, implementation, evaluation and audit), it is important to highlight that both complementarity and coordination can be effective if they are facilitated from the start of the cooperation cycle, i.e. from the programming stage. This implies that all stakeholders should be as much involved in the definition of priorities and strategies as in the following stages. Complementarity and coordination cannot be considered only at the stage of projects' implementation.

The following roles and complementarities between CSO and LRA can be highlighted:

Programming stage:

- At national level: ensure a national political dialogue on development issues with a joint involvement of LRA and CSO to foster this dialogue;
- For LRA, encourage the dialogue between different tiers of government and the local level, including CSOs, to ensure more coherence and alignment of national and local policy development and planning
- Promote and facilitate local democratic governance and decentralisation as a cross-cutting issue or sector approach to reinforce an enabling environment for

poverty reduction strategies, the respect of human rights and decent work conditions. In countries reluctant to implement decentralisation reforms, CSO most often play a trigger role in promoting local democracy and governance. Development partners including European LRA and CSO should jointly foster this kind of actions.

- At local and regional level: LRA have a formal public mandate for planning and delivering public services, including most basic services in countries where decentralisation processes have taken place (water, sanitation, urban and territorial planning, transport, primary education, health etc). This is a clear public mandate, which CSOs' actions should not override when they legitimately work in such areas. The careful attention of donors in this regard is instrumental given that they should not encourage confusion of roles between CSO and LRA. LRA are legitimate coordinators of the development strategies decided at the local/regional level in order to ensure the stakeholders' inclusion in the same long term development plan. They have the political legitimacy and responsibility to ensure that such strategies be implemented. This is the LRA major added value in development.

Identification and formulation stages:

- Ensure the participation and involvement of LRA, CSO and grass root communities in the consultation processes to make sure that the formulated projects correspond to local needs.
- Promote flexible and operational support strategies and modalities; ensure that they are adapted to local and regional situations, do not come in the way of decentralisation processes, and include resources to support local and regional capacities.

Financing stage:

- For the EU: promote co-financing which is better adapted to the different stakeholders (this theme will be developed in working group 3).
- For LRA: support CSO actions at local and regional level, in particular in areas where CSOs' specific expertise is recognised (awareness raising, mobilisation of grass-root communities, human rights etc), and ensure an enabling environment for the local democracy, in particular in facilitating and supporting the actions of CSO (raising issues in the public debate, financial support etc).

Implementation stage:

- Delivering services: improving access to basic services to the poor communities is an essential challenge where LRA and CSOs need to cooperate very closely;
- Mobilisation of CSO & grassroots communities: improve participation in local and territorial decision-making processes, i.e. in local participatory planning or participatory budgeting processes. In general, creating the structural conditions for the civil society to develop itself.
For CSO: Raising awareness and engaging citizens, including the grass root communities, into development strategies and small scale projects;
- CSO have important technical and social expertise at local, national and international levels but no public responsibility for such involvements. Such expertise is to be used in accordance with local and territorial plans established by the public governments;

Monitoring and evaluation stages:

- Joint LRA and CSO participation in monitoring programmes, particularly related to decentralization and sector policies: ensure that national and donor policies respect the processes of transfer of competencies and responsibilities as well as funds to bring public policies closer to the local demands, notably of the most vulnerable groups;

- Reinforce CSOs role in evaluating local and regional policies, transparency and accountability of public authorities, including local and regional governments.

2. What mechanisms can CSOs & LAs themselves develop to ensure complementarity? What specific role can be played by European CSOs & LAs? (are there successful examples?)

There are different levels of complementarity. In this question, complementarity is understood at the project level.

CSO and LRA have initiated many joint development projects in European countries and at European level. Based on existing experiences, the following mechanisms can be highlighted:

- Building common strategies for development cooperation with the creation of local and regional consultation mechanisms. Many European LRA, regions in particular, periodically develop consultation processes with all the stakeholders involved in development cooperation in their region to define a common strategy for development cooperation and to set country and thematic priorities.

In Latin America, cities like Montevideo (Uruguay), Penalolen (Chile), Medellin (Colombia) as well as the province of Santa Fe (Argentina) have created local associations for development, which bring together the various stakeholders involved in development actions, and empower the local government to coordinate such actions according the priorities set.

- LRA financial support to CSO according to strategic priorities allows coordinating and harmonising activities of both stakeholders. Examples of thematic calls for proposals established by individual LRA in Europe, which facilitate coordination of cooperation actions.

The city of Paris

Paris has launched calls for proposals in the area of water and sanitation as well as HIV Aids to support CSO actions.

Since 2006, 21 NGO projects have for instance been funded by the city of Paris in the area of water and sanitation. A third call for proposals was launched in 2009 with 124 projects presented by NGOs. For this call, the grants will amount to 1,3 million Euro for a total amount of projects of 3,2 million Euro.

- Promoting and including CSO initiatives in the public debate and in public policies; engaging in shared awareness raising strategies at European level to educate and sensitize citizens to development cooperation policies.
- Regular dialogue between local CSO and LRA at local and regional level to be fostered through the role of the elected officials in charge of international relations/international solidarity/twinning, who liaise with local CSO.

In partner's country:

- **Promote participatory mechanisms at local/regional level:** to ensure inclusion of all local stakeholders, in particular poorest groups, in the definition of strategies and priorities at local level.
- **Promote local / regional planning with a focus on poverty reduction:** LRA are responsible for the definition and implementation of local and regional development processes. CSO could be essential actors to support inclusiveness and transparency of this process, improving the accountability of LRA towards their citizens.

The Lancashire County Council, United Kingdom and the Gulu Municipal Council, Uganda

Both councils have long worked together, and since 1997, responsibility has been devolved to two charities, representing a wide range of community interests in each town, the Lancashire-Gulu LA21 Link, and the Gulu Link Association. Changing from a council-to-council to a community-based operation meant that clear ownership of the process lay with the community. However, the county councils have retained their involvement ever since, by nominating a Councillor to the Link's board of trustees and by providing small-scale financial and in-kind support for projects.

3. What mechanisms should be developed at country level by the EC & MS to gain a better joint understanding of the distinct roles, added value and complementarities of the various CSOs & LAs? (are there successful examples?)

In this question, the country level is understood as the partner country level.

- **Implementing a regular dialogue with national representative platforms, the EU delegations and MS representations (Embassies).** In most countries, national associations of LRA exist, and are key actors in engaging dialogue with the EU delegations (for those countries which are not yet connected to such dialogues). Contexts vary according to countries and such dialogues would allow sharing information, and collectively discussing and defining the distinct roles and added value of both LRA and CSO according to the country situation.
- Practically, **ensuring genuine participation of LRA and CSOs in partners countries in the consultation process for the preparation of country strategies and in all the programme cycle** (programming, identification, formulation, monitoring and evaluation), through a regular and a structured dialogue with LRA national associations and representative CSOs platforms. This implies the recognition of the national LRA organisation as a true partner, the establishment of clear and predictable schedules of consultation, and the provision of necessary documentation and time to prepare input and feedback on these consultations

Uruguay Integra

Uruguay Integra is an international cooperation program between the European Union (EU) and the Uruguay State through the Office of Planning and Budget

(OPP) which aims to strengthen decentralization and contribute to social and territorial cohesion in Uruguay.

The Implementation Plan covers the period Uruguay Integra 2008 - 2012, working until a total of 15 approved projects are spread over 17 departments of the country. The proposal is to contribute to the democratic transformation of the state, bringing it closer to citizens, achieving political decentralization with civic participation, and growing appreciation of departmental governments for the joint implementation of public policies with the national government and the ministries in all the territory.

- Supporting the institutional **capacity of LRA and CSOs platforms** in partner countries, to improve their capacity to participate in a proactive manner in national dialogues on development strategies and to engage in the EU cooperation process (training, elaboration of adapted tools and staff resources). This is a prerequisite for a structured dialogue at national level.
- Assessing the effectiveness of existing multiactors projects.
- According to the country situations, setting or reinforcing conditions for partnerships in the EU programmes: CSO projects to be developed in partnership with the corresponding local or regional authority.
- Reinforcing the EU delegations capacities, in particular ensuring that a focal point is appointed on local governance and decentralised cooperation issues in relevant countries.
- Holding periodical seminars at delegations level with all involved stakeholders (national authorities, EC, bilateral and multilateral donors involved in the country, LRA and CSO representatives) to address evolving situations and assessing the access to EU programmes and their effectiveness.

4. How to enhance the overall efficiency and coherence of the engagement strategy with CSOs & LAs considering the diversity of actors involved?

In this question, the European level will be addressed.

Firstly it seems important to acknowledge the coordination effort made by LRA. Despite the diversity of the levels involved (municipalities, provinces, regions etc) and the diversity of the EU countries situations and visions regarding decentralisation and decentralised cooperation, a unique European platform was created and coordinates the experiences and contributions of LRA in the structured dialogue.

Acknowledging that all stakeholders are important development partners, and willing to further cooperate with them at European level, we would like to propose the following steps forward to enhance efficiency and coherence of the EU engagement strategy with CSO and LRA:

- Ensuring the capacity of representative platforms at the European level: such platforms should be able to dedicate human resources for engaging in a long-term strategic partnership with the EC and MS, as well as contribute to their mutual activities with their constituencies.
Examples: PLATFORMA contributing to ITUC activities, CONCORD contributing to PLATFORMA activities etc.

- Increasing efforts for balancing the European representation of CSO on the one hand and LRA in the other hand in discussion fora with the EC, as well as for implementing a more coherent and harmonized way of supporting platforms.
- Publicizing joint initiatives in the European agenda, such as the EDD and encourage their development.
- Inviting representative platforms to introduce their work at European level to the EU delegations at their gathering in Brussels
- In addition, the complex process of the structured dialogue as we experience it would suggest allocating specific time for discussions between platforms prior to meetings with the Institutions, as well as creating separate space for bilateral debate for each actor with the Institutions in addition to common discussion sessions. Generally speaking, it seems necessary to have a flexible form of dialogue, which has to remain a mean for mutual understanding and not become a bureaucratic framework. This includes also to enable the participation of new actors and to renew constantly the content of the reflexions.

As a conclusion, the present structured dialogue calls for a proactive dialogue to be continued in order to prepare the new European instruments for 2014-2020.

Layout

Following our comments content-wise, we would like to stress that for the sake of clarity, it is important that in the working papers the same layout applies to the texts concerning CSO and LRA (p7-8). The roles of LRA in particular should be presented in similar boxes.