

Towards a new partnership between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries after 2020

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* Your name and/or name of your organisation

PLATFORMA – The European voice of Local and Regional authorities for development / Council of European Municipalities and Regions

* Country of residence or location of headquarters

Belgium

* E-mail

marine.gaudron@ccre-cemr.org

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Common global interests in a multi-polar world

1. To which degree has the partnership been effective in tackling global challenges?

The EU-ACP framework has proved beneficial for ACP countries. It enabled local governments in these countries to frame their development policies towards global development goals. The EU financial support to reach the Millennium Development Goals had an impact on local economic development.

The EU-ACP framework also facilitate the process of decentralisation in some ACP countries, for instance in Burkina Faso. In this respect, the possibility for decentralised partnerships with EU local governments also helped the partner local authorities to adapt to their new competences and missions.

2. What would be needed to strengthen results in this respect and on which global challenges could the partnership add most value in the future, in the context of the new SDGs framework and in relevant international fora?

Global development challenges should be dealt with through increased participation and involvement of local actors to find the solutions to face these challenges. Indeed for the Sustainable Development Goals, 65% of the 169 agreed targets will only be achieved if local governments are involved both in the design and implementation of development programmes. This approach is consistent with the principles of subsidiarity. Local governments should be empowered at all institutional level for the implementation of development policies, and appropriate funds should be allocated to local authorities and especially in the poorest territories to fight inequalities within and between, countries.

Indeed local governments have various competencies relevant for global development challenges: they are responsible for basic services delivery (water and sanitation, electricity, waste management, etc.), they have a major role on carbon emissions reduction, and adaptation to the effects of climate change, they are in the frontline of social challenges such as social integration of vulnerable populations: youth, women, elderly as well as economic development and stability; they can ensure disaster risk reduction and management, and prepare the populations to react to increased natural disasters; they can also be actors of peaceful dialogues between communities, reducing in-country or cross-border conflicts and have an important role in state-building from the grassroots level.

The EU-ACP partnership should therefore strengthen the role of local and regional governments (LRGs) in development strategies, and adopt a cross-cutting and territorial approach for all its objectives; that is a model of multi-level governance integrating all sectorial policies and all stakeholders that act on a specific territory. Strengthening decentralisation processes, democracy, good governance, fighting against poverty and corruption and ensuring the health of population will be the main challenges to address.

In this respect localisation of the SDGs (i.e. disaggregated data - geographic disaggregation, local data, measures taking into account both urban and rural areas, so that inequalities within countries can be monitored - ; empowered local governments with the legal, financial and technical means to implement the agenda at the local level) will be the key to reach these global Goals. Therefore it is crucial that local governments and their associations are included in the definition of the implementation plan of the SDGs, and that the new EU-ACP framework foster participatory processes for better representation of all territorial actors.

In addition, a more prominent reference to urbanization as one of the major global trends (SDG 11) is needed in the partnership, as it is a topic on which cooperation between the EU and ACP countries is very important, in particular on sustainable management of cities in social, economic and environmental terms.

Human rights, democracy and rule of law, as well as good governance

3. Have the mechanisms provided for in the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA) (i.e. political dialogue, financial support, appropriate measures, suspension of the agreement) achieved meaningful improvements on human rights, democracy, rule of law and good governance, including the fight against corruption? Should the future partnership do more in this regard, and in what way?

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4. Has the involvement of local authorities and non-state actors (i.e. civil society organisations, the media), national parliaments, courts and national human rights institutions in the partnership been adequate and useful to promote human rights, democracy and rule of law as well as good governance? Could they contribute more and in what way?

The Political Dialogue should be a place to address governance issues and promote an agenda of reforms. It should associate local and regional governments, and their representative associations and platforms from both regional groupings: the EU and the ACP. The ACP-EU partnership should also integrate the many provisions and dynamics already existing – for instance in sub-regional groups – to advance on territorial reforms.

It is of particular importance to strengthen multi-level and multi-stakeholder mechanisms for consultation at national level, to ensure that local governments and their associations are included in the definition and implementation of development strategies and consulted on laws and regulations at the national level that affect them. Local and regional governments and their associations should also be strengthened to play this role. This way, bottom up processes to define development needs and challenges can be put in place, to ensure more impact of the Partnership on the ground.

Building sustainable communities requires a strong foundation, which enables local governments to operate as agents for development, as catalysts for economic growth, as advocates for social justice and equity. A solid democratic system can significantly improve the legitimacy and credibility of local government. An efficient decentralisation framework, with clear core powers and responsibilities and transfer of corresponding financial resources ensures that they can carry out their responsibilities effectively and efficiently.

The EU-ACP partnership should promote decentralization programmes and capacity building of local governments in ACP countries with support from EU local government and decentralization experts and organizations, as well as decentralised cooperation (peer-to-peer partnerships) between local governments and their associations from the EU and from ACP countries, as a mean to foster good governance and local democracy.

Local governments working with local civil society organisation play a major role for strengthening participatory and representative mechanism in the elaboration of development policies; as well as for education of the population to human rights or to development challenges as they are the closest actors to the citizens. The new framework should strengthen their role in education in EU as well as in ACP countries.

5. Are the provisions on peace and security in the CPA appropriate and useful and has the balance between regional and ACP involvement been effective?

6. Should the future partnership provide for more effective joint action on conflict prevention, including early warning and mediation, peace-building and state-building activities, as well as on tackling transnational security challenges? Should this be done in the EU-ACP context?

One of the main objectives of the EU-ACP agreement is to foster development in ACP countries, yet development cannot be achieved without peace and stability, which in turns strengthen a culture of democracy and good governance. The new framework should therefore support all actors and all initiatives aiming at peace-building within and between states.

Peace and stability cannot be achieved without strengthening democratic governance at all levels. Conflicts have generally a local dimension that requires local solutions. Peacebuilding at local level can sometimes be more effective, through strengthening mediation between different communities, through enhancing the role of local governments in peacebuilding, through fostering community policing etc. These local initiatives are of particular importance when there is no possibility of working directly with the national government and when local communities are faced with huge challenges to ensure service delivery towards citizens despite the fragile situation of conflict. Moreover, local authorities can play a critical role in distributing humanitarian assistance. In case of disaster in an ACP country, local governments should be identified as the relevant actor for coordination of humanitarian assistance.

The future partnership should also encourage cross-border cooperation within ACP regions, and in-country local governments' dialogue allowing for the creation of a climate of confidence, peace, security and stability which is essential to increasing trade and mobility of people. Supporting cross-border cooperation, especially in the border areas, which are potential areas of integration, but also unstable and at risk, is an added value to the process of continental and subcontinental integration, maximizing potential and minimizing risk. However, due to the diversity of actors and organisations, coordination mechanisms must be found to avoid dispersion of efforts and resources; and to seek out synergies in joint efforts.

The European experience, not necessarily being a model to replicate literally, may be a source of inspiration to boost cross-border cooperation in ACP countries. We recommend that the EU support a reflection on the implementation of cross-border cooperation and provide financial support for the implementation of pilot projects for cross-border cooperation in ACP countries.

Sustainable and inclusive economic growth, investment and trade

7. How effective has the partnership been in promoting sustainable and inclusive economic development?

8. Taking into account the new SDGs framework, should the future partnership do more in this respect, and what?

9. How effective has the partnership been in supporting macroeconomic and financial stability? In which areas would there be added value in ACP-EU cooperation on macroeconomic and financial stability?

10. How effective has the partnership been in improving domestic revenue mobilisation, in promoting fair and efficient tax systems and in combatting illicit financial flows? Would there be added value and more efficiency in stronger ACP-EU cooperation on these matters?

11. Has the partnership been able to contribute substantially to mobilising the private sector and attracting foreign direct investment?

12. How could the potential of the EU and ACP private sector be better harnessed? What should be the main focus of EU and ACP private sector cooperation in a post-Cotonou framework, and what might be the role of ODA in this?

Support to private sector development requires a holistic, cross-cutting approach involving all stakeholders. Governments, including local and regional governments, should be supported in creating a favourable environment for local economic development, but also a framework allowing all citizens to benefit from the economic development.

Local government's support to the private sector (local small and medium enterprises) can play a significant leverage role to attract national and international investors, by ensuring institutional stability:

Local governments can influence the conditions for a favourable business and investment climate. Economic development at the local level can be achieved through different elements:

- It is important to ensure security of property and predictability: have information systems in place (cadastral administration, land registry, permits etc.)
- The local authority has to ensure a coherent territorial planning on a middle-term perspective, and means of action for a better way of organizing market places and local businesses: physical infrastructure should be sufficiently present (roads, water, waste, electricity, internet, transport)
- For an adequate implementation of a local economic development strategy, the local government needs a reliable administration: transparency and accountability are key to facilitate the creation of small and medium local businesses or local markets for instance. Through the information systems, taxes can be levied at local level to increase effectiveness of the service delivery.
- Encouraging social and solidary economy to improve the quality of life of people and communities.
- Fiscal and administrative decentralisation should also be pursued in the framework of EU-ACP agreement through the transfer of administrative and fiscal competences at the local level, to increase the opportunities of local small and medium enterprises. Domestic resources and ODA could then be invested for local economic development. It means that local governments should be given the means to access to and manage their own financial resources (such as general transfers, local taxes and fees), but also have access the financial market

13. In this setting, what opportunities do you see for the new, digital economy?

14. To what extent has the partnership been able to contribute to increase agricultural development and trade?

15. What has been the contribution of the partnership trade preferences to the integration of ACP countries in the world economy and to its development goals?

16. Is there still a need for specific provisions on trade cooperation in the post-Cotonou framework, also taking into account the ACP countries which have not signed an EPA? If so, what could/should they cover?

Human and social development

17. Has the partnership delivered on its human development objective in an effective and efficient way, in particular on poverty eradication, and also concerning gender equality and empowerment of women? How could it be improved?

In connection with all the answers above, local governments play an important role for local human development, reducing inequalities among their population. They are also crucial in integrating women in local democratic life and fighting gender discrimination in local life, through citizen participation and participatory processes.

The partnership should address the issue of decentralisation and local and regional governments' empowerment to design and implement social and human policies, notably policies boosting equality of women and men in local life. This implies clear division of powers, fiscal decentralisation, and appropriate technical competencies at local level.

The future EU-ACP agreement should support and facilitate local governments' initiatives for local development, reduction of social or gender-based inequalities and any kind of discrimination, fight against corruption, strengthening of good governance and democracy

18. Taking into account the new SDGs framework, what are the main challenges related to human development that the future partnership should focus on?

The main challenges that the new framework could address are democracy and good governance, food sovereignty and security, access to water, environmental sustainability and the fight against climate change and its effects, peace and stability, and urbanisation, as they can be root causes of instability and conflicts between communities and halve the progress on poverty eradication

Democracy, good governance at all levels and empowered local governments through capacity building, are prerequisites to peace and sustainable development, including the other challenges mentioned above.

To face climate change, adaptation must be a priority, but mitigation is also an important aspect to address. Diplomatic efforts on climate-related negotiation should be a strong component of the political dialogue between the EU and the ACP group of states. Local and regional governments are part of this diplomatic nexus as they can help achieving ambitious commitments if their needs are taken into consideration.

According to the UNDP “World Urbanisation Prospect” of 2014, Urbanisation will be particularly important in developing countries, and especially Africa (56% of the population living in urban areas by 2050) which is also the continent where half of the world population growth will be concentrated (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs). Urbanisation will be one of the most important challenges of the 21st century, for ACP countries. It is therefore of paramount importance that cities be given appropriate means to organise this urbanisation, in order to leave no population behind and ensure access to basic services to all.

Local and regional governments’ empowerment, as well as decentralised development cooperation through peer to peer exchanges of know-how and technical expertise can help tackle these challenges: (see Q6). Local governments are in charge of a number of policies with direct impact on food security and environment such as increasing energy efficiency in public buildings; promote behavioural change and climate-respectful behaviour; manage and protect natural resources such as forests and water; develop emergency action plans in response to natural and manmade disasters; develop green and compact cities and sustainable public transport networks; equip the territory with basic infrastructures necessary for the agricultural chain; settlement of land disputes; help and monitoring of compliance with health regulations, etc.

Migration and mobility

19. Has the partnership been a useful vehicle for discussing migration issues and has it positively contributed? Has Article 13 CPA been fully applied?

20. Should a future partnership do more in this regard, and on which particular aspects should it focus (legal migration and mobility, addressing root causes of migration, return and readmission, tackling human trafficking and smuggling, international protection)?

Addressing root causes of migration – that is, addressing development challenges – should be the primary focus.

Giving shelter to refugees in the countries neighbouring the areas in conflict, is part of the long-term perspective of the refugee crisis. This shelter should therefore not only been primarily seen as humanitarian emergency support, but should become an integral part of the development perspective of the region. Food, clothing, a roof are not sufficient: safety, health, sanitation, education, work and income as well as freedom, acceptance and inclusion are of paramount importance. And this implies a large role of local governments.

Cooperation between local governments in countries affected by migration (departure, transit and arrival countries) should be fostered, as well as triangular cooperation with local governments from European countries supporting local governments from ACP countries receiving migrants, in order to ensure service delivery, shelter, long term planning to ensure inclusion of “host communities” etc. Migration should therefore not only be considered as a North/South issue: the EU-ACP framework could be a good forum to address support to South/South migration as well.

EU and ACP local governments and their associations should be invited to policy discussions on migration, and be given the appropriate means to strengthen social cohesion in their territories.

It will also be necessary to include a strong component on support to local economic development and youth employment, as well as on fighting human trafficking, build on the positive impacts of migration, and facilitate the participation of migrant groups in discussions on migration. Raising awareness of the populations on migration could also be addressed by the new framework.

It could also facilitate the mobility and exchanges of youth/ professionals from local governments / territorial actors between EU local governments and their partner in ACP countries, in the framework of twinning/ decentralised cooperation.

A stronger political relationship

21. How effective has the political dialogue been and at which level is it the most effective: national, regional and through the joint EU-ACP institutions? Should the scope of political dialogue be widened or narrowed?

Given the role of local governments in defining their development priorities and plans, their respective platforms from EU and ACP countries should be able to actively participate in the discussions of the joint EU-ACP institutions. We call for a widened political dialogue that would institutionally involve local and regional governments through their representative platforms at national, regional or global levels. It will be necessary that the new framework open transparent spaces for information and participation.

22. Would a stronger involvement of EU Member States, associating their bilateral policies and instruments to the political dialogue at national level, enhance the dialogue's effectiveness and efficiency?

23. Has the fact that the agreement is legally binding been instrumental to its implementation as compared to other regional partnerships based on political declarations?

Coherence of geographical scope

24. Could a future framework be usefully opened up to other countries than the current members of the ACP Group of States? Which countries would that be?

Given that the main objective of the EU-ACP framework is to foster the development of developing countries, the future framework could be opened to other developing countries in Latin America for instance.

25. What kind of framework should govern EU and ACP relations? How could an ACP-EU successor framework relate to the more recent EU regional partnerships with Africa, Caribbean and Pacific States? Could a future ACP-EU framework include distinct partnerships with regional partners?

26. Is there scope for building in more structured relationships with Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa?

Cooperation tailored more towards groups of countries with similar development level

27. Is the current system of allocation of development resources, based on need and capacities as well as performance, sufficient for channelling funds towards those countries where the highest impact can be obtained? Should allocation of resources continue to prioritise countries most in need, including fragile states?

28. What kind of cooperation could help to cover the specific needs of more developed ACP countries with a view to attaining more equitable and sustainable growth?

Many former “developing countries” are moving towards “middle income countries”. In these countries it is important to focus on inequalities within countries. A territorial approach to development will be necessary in the new cooperation framework so as to respect the differentiation principle and reduce inequalities within a partner country.

The economic growth leads to a fast growing middle income class, with more financial means and with access to more education. These groups of citizen will become more critical and will become more aware about their rights and duties. This will, as has been the case in many developed countries, lead to more demands for all layers of government. Local governments should be equipped to guide this development process, and to involve citizens.

1. The formal and informal mechanisms for information, transparency and citizen participation need to be strengthened and properly implemented, in letter and in spirit. This requires new ways of reaching out to all citizens – including those with less social or political power, or living further away.

2. Local governments should have more power of financial self-government. The growing middle income class will contribute more to taxes but will want to decide on how it is spent. Local governments should ensure service delivery towards all citizens, in particular the marginalized ones and should ensure that through citizen participation mechanisms, the route towards development and stability will be designed.

3. Local governments need to put in place a proactive public communication strategy, providing information via different media, adapted to the needs of all sections of the community.

4. Mechanisms for answerability also need to be enhanced, with requirements to justify and explain actions, and using new tools like citizens' charters and accountability scorecards.

5. Local government associations can help to train councillors and senior officials in public communication and local accountability. At the same time, local government associations should be involved in national dialogues on development strategies, in order to ensure that national strategies take into account the needs at local level.

6. International donors should give more priority to local accountability.

Cooperation modalities to build capacities of local governments through cooperation with or between local governments, such as decentralised cooperation, are particularly relevant in this approach as it is tailored for the specific territorial contexts and built on the needs assessed by partners themselves. It ensures ownership by the beneficiaries of all development programmes implemented in their territories. At this point, it is noteworthy that the DCI thematic programmes only provide for a small volume of funding as compared to other instruments such in the DCI or the EDF.

It will also be important to address in the new EU-ACP framework the issue of effective taxation system to ensure equal redistribution of resources in country, especially through fiscal decentralisation.

Strengthen the relationship with key actors

29. Has the current model of stakeholder engagement been conducive to attaining the objectives of the partnership in an efficient way? Which actors could play a more significant role in the implementation of the partnership? How could this be addressed?

Local and regional governments are key actors implementing and generating local impacts of development strategies agreed at national, regional or international levels. It is therefore necessary to involve local and regional governments as early as in the design phase of development plans and projects.

Through development cooperation programmes, local and regional governments and their associations also play a major role in bringing closer EU and ACP populations.

30. What could be done to promote effective and efficient involvement of both international and domestic private sector, civil society, social partners and local authorities in the partnership?

Local authorities and their associations should be clearly mentioned as category alongside national governments thereby ensuring specific programming. This could lead to the use of aid modalities for this category that were hitherto only reserved for central governments, e.g. budget support to cities combined with a programmatic approach to improve urban and financial management.

Particularly in view of the unequal distribution of wealth (question 28) in both less and more developed ACP countries, it will be of importance to look beyond state level towards the local and regional disparities. Only when looking at the challenges at the grassroots level, there will be room for improvement in terms of exclusion.

This also implies setting up a consultation mechanism between local and national levels, including the association of local governments, to ensure that challenges at the local level can be successfully included in the national development strategies and can be part of the EU ACP partnership programming.

The partnership can play a key role, given the EU experience on subsidiarity and multi-level governance. Local governments and their associations from Europe can play an important role in supporting the local governments and their associations.

Decentralised cooperation or twinning can be particularly efficient to assess directly the needs and priorities of the territories, and for defining development programmes in which the main actors get ownership.

31. Should the partnership be open to new actors as referred above?

32. In this regard, should the possibility of opening up the partnership to 'associated members' or 'observers' be considered?

33. How could a new framework promote triangular and South-South cooperation, including the increased involvement of ACP States as development actors in support of other ACP countries?

Streamline the institutional set-up and functioning of the partnership

34. Has the joint institutional set-up (with the ACP-EU Council of Ministers, the ACP-EU Committee of Ambassadors, and the Joint Parliamentary Assembly) been effective in debating and promoting common views and interests and in providing political guidance and momentum to the EU-ACP partnership and the implementation of the CPA?

The new framework could promote tripartite cooperation between local governments and their associations, by facilitating and encouraging this cooperation modality in the different areas of actions covered by the agreement.

35. What is the added value of the joint ACP-EU institutions as compared to more recent regional and regional economic community frameworks for dialogue and cooperation?

36. What institutional arrangements would most effectively help address common challenges and promote joint interests?

37. Should a higher degree of self-financing of this functioning (ACP-EU Joint institutions and ACP secretariat) by the ACP States be required?

Better adapted and more flexible development cooperation tools and methods

38. Is there added value in having a dedicated financing instrument in support of the ACP-EU partnership? If so, what are the reasons and how would it differ from other external financing instruments funded by the general budget of the Union? Is this instrument flexible enough, especially to address crisis situations? Can this instrument be deployed differently?

39. What is the added value of the EDF's co-management system involving national authorities in the programming and management of aid programmes, as compared to other EU cooperation instruments in non-ACP countries?

40. Does the current set-up of the programming process and implementation of activities lead to real ownership by the beneficiaries? What could be improved? How can the EU and Member States maximise the impact of joint programming?

The current aid architecture has, perhaps unintended, centralising effects. Budget support being the preferred aid modality centrally managed through Ministries / National Audit Offices. It is very important to build in mechanisms for downward accountability and give local and regional governments a voice. The thematic programme only partially allows for this. We advocate that specific instruments be developed under the new partnership agreement for bottom-up accountability mechanisms.

41. Does the variety of existing tools adequately support the EU and ACP common principles and interests and are there gaps that should be addressed? How do you assess the effectiveness and efficiency of various implementation modalities?

42. Should a higher degree of self-financing from the ACP States be required for activities to ensure ownership? Would this apply to all countries? On which principles should this be based?

43. How can the expertise of the EU and its Member States be better mobilised, particularly in the middle-income countries?

Local government capacity development ; Decentralised cooperation ; twinning ; peer-to-peer partnerships are appropriate forms of partnership between EU and partner countries, enabling for real sharing of expertise and know-how between peers, with a sense of ownership; although these modalities of cooperation can only be efficient if a decentralisation process has been achieved in partner countries. Therefore the EU-ACP framework should primarily focus on decentralisation and empowerment of local government in ACP countries.

PLATFORMA, the voice of European local and regional governments for development cooperation gathers actors active in development cooperation. This expertise and experience can be made available for the ACP programmes.

PLATFORMA observes that large scale interventions through specific EU trust funds, to which the EDF is an important contributor, are essentially build on delegated agreements through PAGODA contract modalities. Organizations of European local authorities do not qualify for this kind of cooperation, but can only contribute through the CSO-LA thematic programme, which represent less than 1% of other EC budgets. It is important to look into this to unlock expertise for the development of local governments in the ACP countries.

Contact

✉ europeaid-01@ec.europa.eu
