



CRPM CPMR

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CPMR EXTERNAL COOPERATION WORKING GROUP
3 JULY 2014 - CPMR BRUSSELS OFFICE

- MINUTES -

Attendees:

AQUITAINE: Nolwenn LE TALLEC, Officer, Bureau Aquitaine Europe

BRETAGNE / PAYS DE LA LOIRE / POITOU-CHARENTES - Espace Interrégionale Européen:
Laure PHILIPPE KAGAN, Officer, External Cooperation

CATALUNYA (outgoing WG lead member): Mireia SOLÉ LLORT, Catalan Delegation in Brussels

EMILIA-ROMAGNA: Graziana GALATI, Policy Officer

EUSKADI - BASQUE COUNTRY (incoming WG lead member)

Paul ORTEGA, Director- Basque Country Development Cooperation Agency (by skype)

Marta MARÍN, Delegate- Basque Government Delegation to the European Union

Camila DE EPALZA, European Union Policy Officer (Development Cooperation and Multilateral focal point), Basque Government Delegation to the European Union

Jugatx ORTIZ, Policy Officer Basque Government Delegation to the European Union

LANGUEDOC-ROUSILLON: Julie ESTAL, Policy Officer Europe, Maison de la Région à Bruxelles

PROVENCE-ALPES-COTE D'AZUR: Chiara MAZZONE, Acting Head of Brussels Office

WELSH GOVERNMENT: John TOWNLEY, Head of International Sustainable Development & Wales for Africa Team (by skype)

CPMR GENERAL SECRETARIAT

Eleni MARIANOU, Secretary General

Maruxa CARDAMA, Adviser to the External Cooperation Working Group

Claire STREET, Policy Assistant (by skype)

Apologies:

GOBIERNO DE CANARIAS, Gemma MARTÍNEZ SOLIÑO, Canarias Government Delegation in Brussels

TUSCANY, Flavia DONATI, International Cooperation Officer

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Eleni Marianou welcomed the participants and briefly outlined the aim of the meeting. The CPMR External Cooperation Group was set up in 2009 with the aim of gathering a representative number of regions from the different Geographical Commissions to work on areas of common interest around EU development policy and neighbourhood policy.

Achievements so far: Under the leadership of the Region of Catalunya since the inception of the Working Group, there has been 5 years of activity mainly linked to the EU agenda. The CPMR has participated in the first Platforma programme with the aim of ensuring the profile and engagement of regional authorities in EU development policy.

Objective of this meeting: To re-activate the Group, bringing together motivated member regions to define priorities and establish a roadmap for the working group as the new EU programming period gets underway. Catalonia is stepping down as Working Group lead and, in liaison with the CPMR Secretariat, the Basque Country is taking over this role.

One priority deserving particular monitoring by this Group is the new Strategic Partnership being developed by PLATFORMA with the European Commission. The Group felt that for the future programme of work of the Group it will be important to widen the scope of activities and partnerships. There was also agreement in having this Working Group address the external dimension of the works of other relevant CPMR geographical commissions and working groups, as appropriate. The Group also agreed on reaching out to the wide CPMR membership to encourage new memberships to the Working Group, with a particular focus on geographical balance within possible.

REMARKS BY THE INCOMING CHAIR

Paul Ortega, Director of the Basque Development Agency, thanked Catalonia for the excellent work it had undertaken over the past few years. The Basque Country would be following up on the previous achievements and planned to provide a work programme to take forward CPMR action.

He briefly presented the Basque Development Agency's role. With a budget in 2014 of €35 million, it works together with NGOs, the EU and other partners. While much of its work was with NGOs through a support programme, it also had direct cooperation activities through other partners. It also follows development cooperation policy at the EU and international levels.

Marta Marín and Camila de Epalza outlining the key priority axes that Euskadi would like to propose for the WG. Euskadi will drive the Group's work in close cooperation with all the members: trying to make concrete, value-added initiatives; supporting profile and advocacy on the added value of decentralized cooperation; fostering new cooperation processes; mainstreaming cooperation work in CPRM activities as appropriate; and strengthening the exchange of good practices among the members.

The new European and international agendas and the incoming EU programming period (European Year for Development 2015, Assises 2015, European Policy Forum, Agenda Post-2015, etc.) offer many opportunities, as well as challenges. Furthermore, they offer the chance to improve dialogue and liaison with a wide array of EU institutions' contacts (new Commission and European Parliament) and with key development actors and networks (CONCORDE, PLATFORMA, etc.).

Regarding the elaboration and implementation of the European Commission's Thematic Programme for Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities 2014-2020, there are concrete opportunities and projects to monitor and engage in. As a backdrop, the European Commission DEVCO has recurrently said that the credibility of all the actors is at stake and that they are all actors to live up to the claims and expectations of rigour and maturity. Among the opportunities:

- Strategic Partnership between the European Commission and International/Regional Associations of Local Authorities, such as PLATFORMA.
- Calls for proposals by national delegations of the European Commission. There are 70 EC delegations operating on the ground in partner countries with a mission to reinforce decentralised cooperation. 80% of EU money goes through these delegations. There is strong potential for the CPMR and its Regions to develop active relations with these delegations, working also in close liaison with other key development partners.

Furthermore, in view of the existing initiatives taking place among our members at regional and local level, it is found interesting to exchange ideas and lessons learnt, open collaboration processes, identify and structure experiences and good practices and foster innovative and effective processes and actions.

Last but not least, Euskadi will strive to ensure a dynamic coordination of the Group with regular activity for its members, as well as synergies with relevant CPMR geographical commissions and working groups

REMARKS BY THE OUTGOING CHAIR

It has been a pleasure for Catalunya to coordinate the External Cooperation Group of the CPMR since 2009. It has been five years of activity, with different degrees of intensity, often linked to EU or Platforma activities that have triggered our reaction.

During this period, our main concern was to make sure that regions are taken into account in EU development policy, lobbying directly with the EU institutions or through Platforma. It has not been an easy task. Although regionalism is a fundamental policy of the European Union, regions are not very visible decentralised cooperation actors. It is symptomatic that there is an overrepresentation of local/municipal governments within Platforma, for instance.

The same happens worldwide. The contribution of local/municipal governments to development is more distinctive than that of the regions. And the need to achieve sustainable urbanisation is making its way through in the discussions to define the agenda post-2015 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Since the agenda which is defined at the global level will form the basis of future EU development policy, we have insisted on regions having a closer look and participation in the global debates. At the same, we have lobbied for the EU to take into account the role of regions in development, when defining its contribution to the global agenda. We encourage the group to pursue on these efforts.

Also, to be active and alert within Platforma, particularly in the new strategic partnership that will be signed with the Commission. To do so, we have often felt the lack of an articulated discourse on which is our distinctive contribution, and this is probably something we should be working on. And of course we could do more with more resources, but we all know what the situation of decentralised cooperation in a Europe in crisis is. So it is very important that we keep focused...

To finish, Catalunya would like to thank all the members of the group for their support, involvement and participation. And special thanks to the Secretariat of CPMR, with which we have been working hand in hand during all this period, always on tight deadlines. We wish good luck to the Basque Country in its new capacity as coordinator, and we offer any support needed to make the transition smooth.

REPORT ON PLATFORMA ACTIVITIES

Maruxa Cardama, Advisor to the CPMR External Cooperation Working Group, briefed participants on the state of play of collaboration with PLATFORMA.

Ongoing activity under the present PLATFORMA programme pertains to an ongoing project with the European Commission (running up to 2016). In this context the main CPMR activity will consist of hosting a meeting of PLATFORMA at a session of the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission in Rome (Lazio) in November 2014.

PLATFORMA's activity up to the end of 2014 will focus on the negotiation of the next Strategic Partnership; on EU development cooperation; and on advocacy with the new European Parliament and college of EU Commissioners. As regards the Strategic Partnership, under the new programming period, the EC is not intending to continue a partnership on a project-by-project basis. Its idea rather is to focus on particular geographical areas of the world and establish wide strategic partnerships with representative networks/associations in each. For the area of Europe, the chosen actor is PLATFORMA. The European Commission has prominently identified UCLG United Cities and Local Government as the key actor for other geographical areas.

Eleni Marianou, Maruxa Cardama and Camila de Epalza from the Basque Government attended two PLATFORMA meetings in Paris on 2 July 2014: a meeting of the Steering Committee and an inaugural meeting of the new Political Council.

The new Political Council includes one representative per member, the majority from local authorities. On this occasion, Mr Nottarangelo, on behalf of Silvia Godelli, Regional Minister of Puglia Region, represented the CPMR in the Political Council. It had been planned to elect two spokespersons of the Political Council, one from the regional family and one from the local one. During the meeting a long debate took place on the opportunity of having a third spokesperson elected from the local family, in order to honour all candidates who had submitted their applications (two locals and one regional). The final decision was to establish four spokespersons: one to represent local authorities (Paris); one to represent associations of local authorities (VNG Dutch local authorities); one to represent the regional authorities (President Rossi from Tuscany) and one to represent associations of regions (to be appointed - discussions between CPMR and AEBR are expected, since they are the regional associations members of PLATFORMA).

At the Steering Committee it was noted by some members that the way in which the activity of PLATFORMA is unfolding and being presented is increasingly making the network look like a self-standing organisation; to the detriment of profiling the individual actions by each member and of adding-value to the collective work of all.

The Steering Committee discussed the state of play of the Strategic Partnership negotiations with the EC. The CPMR felt and expressed that discussions were not as substantive as concrete as the imminent calendar is urging for. The scheduled timeline for signature of the Strategic Partnership with the European Commission is end September. Parallel to the individual negotiation of each Strategic Partnership, the EC needs to seek the approval of this new approach by the European

Council and the European Parliament. Given the current transition moment in follow up of the recent EU elections, these steps will not take place until the autumn.

PLATFORMA has not started the elaboration of a concrete programme of activities. The latest PLATFORMA proposal submitted to the European Commission in June includes a number of strategic objectives, which to the eyes of the CPMR Secretariat remain rather vague, making it difficult to identify added value, collaboration possibilities and anchors for work with a regional approach. The CPMR understand PLATFORMA's aim is to remain flexible. However, it reiterated at the meeting that flexibility should be kept vis-à-vis the European Commission, while greater specific content should be identified vis-à-vis PLATFORMA members. The CPMR Secretariat has suggested and volunteered to take part in task force to develop in detail the programme of work over the summer.

The Political Council enjoyed the participation of Mr. Angelo Baglio, from the European Commission DEVCO/Civil Society, Local Authorities, Head of Unit. Mr Baglio emphasized the change of collaboration paradigm behind the new approach of strategic partnerships and underlined the fact that these represent a long-term commitment running until 2020 with a mid-term review in 2017. Mr Baglio reminded PLATFORMA members that this approach still requires approval by other EU Institutions.

Over the past months the CPMR Secretariat has reiterated to the PLATFORMA Secretariat the need to provide specific answers to questions related to the legal and financial responsibilities that would entail a potential signature of such a Strategic Partnership by PLATFORMA members. The Strategic Partnership has a budget of over €7 million with approximately €5.5 being requested from the European Commission. 15 to 25% co-financing remains to be financed by PLATFORMA members, including the CPMR.

On the date of elaboration of these minutes (14th July), the CPMR has not received any follow up information regarding further elaboration of the programme of work and only partial information regarding legal and financial responsibilities.

The Group agreed on the need to secure full clarity regarding budgetary, legal and activity aspects before committing to engaging in the Strategic Partnership. It was suggested that CPMR should only engage in PLATFORMA around activities of relevance and added value to its members. It was suggested to try to identify how decentralised cooperation is implemented through the objectives identified in the PLATFORMA proposal.

PRESENTATIONS BY MEMBER REGIONS

The members of the Group each briefly presented their region's priorities and actions and available budget in the field of development cooperation. In preparation of this meeting, the CPMR Secretariat had requested members to share key activities and ongoing projects. At the meeting Regions were warmly thanked for their substantive contributions and encouraged to complement them on the basis of a template matrix to be soon circulated.

TIMETABLE OF NEXT ACTIONS

Action	Lead	Timeline
Minutes of this meeting	CPMR Secretariat	mid July
Set up shared Dropbox for members to be able to access and shares WG materials (it will include all papers received from the PLATFORMA Secretariat)	CPMR Secretariat	mid July
Draft Action Plan for the WG	Euskadi as Lead Region and CPMR Secretariat	mid July
Matrix to complete regions' priorities	Euskadi as Lead Region and CPMR Secretariat	mid July
Draft amended Terms of Reference of the WG	CPMR Secretariat and Euskadi as Lead Region	mid July
Participation of the CPMR Secretariat in the PLATFORMA task force for finalising the Strategic Partnership proposal (awaiting follow up by PLATFORMA Secretariat)	CPMR Secretariat in consultation with Euskadi as Lead Region and with WG members as appropriate	Until end September
Feedback from members on action plan and completion of priorities matrix	By all WG members	3 rd September – For both documents to be finalised by mid-September
Identification of location of MEPs from regions in the different European Parliament Committees	By all WG members	3 rd September
Validation of Terms of Reference and Action Plan of the WG	Members at GA	CPMR General Assembly (24-26 September)
Next meeting of the Group		October TBC