

# External Cooperation Working Group

Chaired by



## - MEETING MINUTES - 9 OCTOBER 2015

### BASQUE GOVERNMENT DELEGATION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION, BRUSSELS

#### Attendees:

#### **EUSKADI - BASQUE COUNTRY (WG Lead Region)**

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

#### **PRINCIPADO DE ASTURIAS**

Remedios BORDIU, Asturias Brussels Office

#### **ANDALUCIA:**

María GODOY, Policy Officer, Junta de Andalucía, Brussels Delegation

#### **AQUITAINE:**

Nolwenn LE TALLEC, Officer, Bureau Aquitaine Europe

#### **BRETAGNE / PAYS DE LA LOIRE / POITOU-CHARENTES - Espace Interrégionale Européen:**

Stephane PEYHORGUE, Policy Officer, Bretagne-Pays de la Loire-Poitou-Charentes

#### **CANARIAS:**

Gemma MARTÍNEZ SOLIÑO, Regional Delegation of the Canary Islands to the EU  
Carmen M. DIAZ FARIÑA, Regional Delegation of the Canary Islands to the EU

#### **CATALUNYA:**

Mireia SOLÉ LLORT, Policy Officer, Government of Catalonia Delegation to the European Union

#### **EMILIA-ROMAGNA:**

Francesca PASSERI, Policy Officer, Emilia-Romagna Region EU Office

#### **PROVENCE-ALPES-COTE D'AZUR:**

Emmeline ALLIOUX, Région Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur Brussels Office  
Mathieu ANDREADAKIS, Région Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur Brussels Office

#### **PLATFORMA SECRETARIAT**

Florent RESCHE-RIGON, Project Officer

#### **CPMR GENERAL SECRETARIAT**

Eleni MARIANO, Secretary General  
Maruxa CARDAMA, Adviser to the External Cooperation Working Group (consultant)  
Alexis CHATZIMPIROS, Adviser Energy/Islands  
Claire STREET, Policy Assistant (by teleconf.)

#### Apologies:

BRETAGNE, Yannick PONT

## WELCOME

**Camila De Epalza** from the Basque Government Delegation to the European Union, and **Maruxa Cardama**, Advisor to CPMR, welcomed participants, thanking them for attending and presenting the agenda for the meeting

A tour de table of participants followed (see list above). **Eleni Marianou**, CPMR Secretary General joined the meeting and conducted the discussions with the guest representative of the Platforma Secretariat.

### 1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OF THE MINUTES OF THE GROUP MEETING HELD ON 10 MARCH 2015

Owing to unforeseen circumstances, Florent Resche-Rigon, Policy Officer from Platforma secretariat had been delayed. The first item on the agenda was therefore put back, awaiting his arrival.

The minutes of the meetings on 10 March 2015 were adopted (link to [Minutes](#))

### 2. PLATFORMA: STATE OF PLAY OF THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND OTHER ONGOING ACTIVITIES

#### **a) Internal Discussion**

Pending Florent Resche-Rigon's arrival, an internal discussion began on the Strategic Partnership.

#### **Background**

The Strategic Partnership marks a new approach for articulating the relationship and concrete work between the European Commission and the Associations of Local and Regional Authorities. The transition to this new approach coincided with the establishment of a new European Commission. The political and technical decisions have taken much more time than initially foreseen by Platforma. The political agreement between Platforma and the Commission was only signed in January 2014. The technical agreement was subsequently developed and the grant agreement was signed between the two parties last July. There will be a mid-term review in 2017 for the European Commission to evaluate experience of this approach of strategic partnerships.

The signature of the bilateral agreement between the CEMR - which is legally hosting Platforma - and the CPMR is outstanding. The budgetary envelope and areas of work for the CPMR remain unchanged. CPMR members can access a memo with all details on these two aspects from the Dropbox of the Working Group. However, the bilateral agreement will need to detail important aspects of financial and legal responsibility. It will also contain detailed provisions on the operationalisation and delivery of the outputs/deliverables, which are expected from the CPMR. The CPMR is still awaiting to receive a draft of such bilateral agreement from the Platforma Secretariat/CEMR. In the absence of a signed agreement, it is difficult and not advisable for the CPMR secretariat to kick off officially any formal activity related to our outputs/deliverables for Platforma. However, in the interest of nourishing the Working Group's Action Plan and contributing to the collective effort that Platforma is, the CPMR secretariat is open to initiating work informally. The idea is to pave the ground for solid and timely work within Platforma, as soon as the important legal, financial and operational aspects are agreed with the signature of the bilateral CPMR-Platforma/CEMR agreement. The latest estimated date for such signature indicated by the Platforma secretariat to the CPMR is late October/early November.

As a reminder, within the Strategic Partnership, the CPMR has chosen to work on areas that it is already addressing through its External Cooperation working group and/or Inter-Mediterranean Commission, thus building upon the work already carried out by CPMR members and maximising

the impact of the support offered through Platforma. Within 2017, the CPMR will be working with Platforma on two components:

- Research and studies.
- Southern Neighbourhood (a partner-led activity where CPMR is lead partner).

Regarding research & studies, CPMR will work on two themes, namely a new approach to cooperation for efficiency innovation & indicators and public private partnerships. The start of CPMR's work on these studies is contingent on the overall coordination that the Platforma Secretariat is expected to provide for the whole package of research pieces & studies carried out by different Platforma members besides the CPMR. Clarification from Platforma has been requested regarding the intellectual logic determining the sequence of studies (it is unlikely that the studies concerning CPMR would be among the first.), the format for these pieces and the terms of reference for operationalising them and hiring the writers/coordinators. Maruxa has suggested to Platforma that they convene and facilitate a call among all members responsible for delivering one of these research pieces. Platforma warmly welcomed the idea. To date, no indicative date for such coordination call has been communicated to the CPMR.

In the case of the Southern Neighbourhood component, the administrative delays experienced between the Commission and Platforma over the past year, as well as the outstanding bilateral agreement are affecting the ability of the CPMR Inter-Mediterranean Commission (IMC) to move according to the plan we had shared with Platforma back in April. The activity will be a tangible capacity-building action, producing a manual for Regional Authorities on the issue of territorial development and organising training sessions in the Maghreb. Details are available in the memo accessible from the Dropbox of the Working Group. The CPMR's IMC has a tentative calendar and is ready to initiate works in this area. The absence of a signed bilateral agreement CPMR-CEMR does not allow to continue with the original idea of organising in late November a fully fledged inception seminar towards the elaboration of the manual on the occasion of IMC Bureau meeting in Rabat, Morocco. However, the IMC Secretariat and the general CPMR secretariat are keen on providing space during the IMC Bureau for an initial informal brainstorming session among members on the key aspects to be covered by the manual in order for it to be relevant and substantive to members' action on the ground.

In conclusion, it was recalled that the relationship with Platforma remains interesting because it is the identified partner within the Strategic Partnership, and that the Regions - through CPMR as a partner in Platforma - are keen on engaging with the European Commission in this new framework. However, the CPMR External Cooperation Group should not lose track of its own Action Plan and ability to deliver individually and by means of other alliances. In this regard, Camila de Epalza recalled the work already carried out on sharing best practices between the Regions. Link to [Dropbox](#)

#### b) Presentation by Platforma Secretariat

When Florent Resche-Rigon arrived he presented the state of play on behalf of Platforma Secretariat.

Firstly he gave a recap of the process. Platforma has spent 19 months working on the Strategic Partnership with the European Commission. Through the Strategic Partnership, DEVCO EuropeAid has chosen international and regional networks of development cooperation as its privileged partners. Alongside Platforma, the other partners are UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments), AIRF (International Association of French-speaking Regions), the Commonwealth Local Government Forum and UCLG-A (African branch). DEVCO has expressed its will to work with Regional and Local Authorities to support their objectives.

Regarding the practical details for executing the work, FRR recalled that this is a big agreement with many members. The Platforma secretariat is in the process of preparing bilateral agreements with its members and conducting internal reviews. CEMR is the legal entity hosting the Platforma

secretariat and as such is signatory to all contracts. FRR also indicated that besides the overall bilateral agreement with the CEMR/Platforma Secretariat, the CPMR is expected to sign a specific/individual Memorandum of Understanding for each of the deliverables/outputs. Maruxa thanked FRR for this piece of news and noted that it is changing the line of work that had been indicated by the Platforma Secretariat a couple of months ago.

Maruxa highlighted the relative urgency of sorting out the bilateral agreement, since the CPMR through its Inter-Mediterranean Commission was ready to start work even if informally but would not be able to initiate formal work or expenditure without a bilateral CEMR-CPMR agreement duly in place. Maruxa replied that she would reflect together with Davide Strangis, Executive Secretary of the CPMR Inter-Mediterranean Commission, on the best way to take this action forward.

FRR indicated that some members of Platforma were already moving forward with their activities before officially signing any agreement, because of the urgent nature of these activities. Platforma was committed to financially supporting certain activities that could not be postponed. Regarding the activity linked to studies and reports, FRR affirmed that no timeline could yet be indicated by Platforma. When asked if there would be coordination between all the Platforma members on intellectual questions related to this activity, FRR gave assurance that this would be the case.

Eleni Marianou raised the question of arrangements regarding the CPMR's financial management and liability. FRR replied that each partner is responsible for its own pot of money. Each partner is liable for its own expenses and should ensure that they are eligible in accordance with EU rules. This provides a certain security since each member is a party to the grant through Platforma, and if a partner drops out for any reason the other partners are not held responsible. Eleni noted that this differs from the previous contract in which the CEMR was held liable in the case of defaulting partners.

Answering a query about the number of staff working for the Platforma secretariat, FRR confirmed that a number of people had been recruited recently, notably to replace staff who had left. In addition to four existing members of staff three new employees had been recruited under fixed-term contracts (one to replace a maternity leave).

Camila and Maruxa thanked Florent for his clarifications. He and Eleni then left the meeting.

### **3. REVIEW OF DRAFT POLICY POSITION, WITH A VIEW TO APPROVAL BY THE GROUP**

Eleni briefly outlined the process leading up to the CPMR General Assembly to be held in Florence on 5 and 6 November 2015. The General Assembly is the main annual event gathering around 300 participants including many regional leaders. This year the Commissioner for Regional Policy would be present. Topics covered to be covered are EU policies on Cohesion, Maritime Affairs, Accessibility, Migration and Energy & Climate Action. The General Assembly adopts policy papers including the one under preparation by this External Cooperation Group. The Political Bureau first has to validate this policy paper by written procedure. The finalised document would then be translated in all CPMR working languages and sent to all CPMR members two weeks before the General Assembly.

A first draft prepared by Camila had been sent to members of the WG. This had been followed by the second draft prepared by the CPMR Secretariat, which retained the essence of the first document's elements on development cooperation; adjusted it to conform to CPMR format, and added more provisions with a view to addressing some crucial aspects of the regional dimension of the so-called 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Emilia Romagna had sent some comments by email, which were included as track changes in a revised draft that was handed out to the group members for discussion.

Maruxa briefly outlined the content of the paper. The first part gives some background regarding the topics of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their impact on regional development. It explains the transformative potential of development cooperation and mentions the crucial aspect of multi-stakeholder partnerships.

The second part sets out the CPMR's position, welcoming the adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development agenda. Universality is mentioned as an important element, but stressing that this should not mean one size fits all and that it is necessary to ensure differentiation. EU regional cooperation is highlighted as a model for delivering impact at territorial level. This part also stresses the importance of work among regions and also by regions in collaboration with NGOs, civil society and the private sector. From point 6 onwards, the paper develops in more detail the essential territorial approach to the agenda, taking into account the new paradigm and core responsibilities. The text refers specifically here to chapters of the Sustainable Development Agenda.

Discussion on the paper followed and it was decided by group members present, among other amendments:

- To adjust and shorten the title of the document, including the words decentralised cooperation as suggested by Emilia Romagna
- To urge the international community to mobilise and sustain resources commensurate with the universality and paradigm change outlined by this new Agenda.
- To include the suggestion made by Emilia Romagna to use the term 'institutional building actions' as a core component of what Decentralised Cooperation is.
- To include the suggestion made by Emilia Romagna to highlight how decentralised cooperation can benefit the third countries, bringing together a wide range of local actors and enhancing the capacities of elected representatives and officials.
- On point 9, to add a bullet point on microcredits. Indeed it was pointed out that this was an important source of funding to be exploited for projects in many subject areas
- On point 9, to develop the bullet point on credit worthiness of local and regional governments. The Regions want to highlight the investment value of RLAs, who want credit worthiness to attract funding but are committed to remaining financially healthy.

The policy position remained open to further comment until 10am on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> October, after which it will be translated and sent to the CPMR Political Bureau for written approval. The final approved document will be shared with all CPMR members 2 weeks before the annual General Assembly.

Camila indicated that after the AG adoption, the position paper can be sent to the EU (at political level) and UN.

#### **4. EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AMONG MEMBERS ON UPCOMING ACTIVITIES OF THE GROUP:**

In light of the discussion on sources of financing for the purpose of the policy position paper, it was suggested to invite UN-Habitat to a future meeting of the group in order to discuss this technical area in greater detail.

It was suggested that the next meeting of the Working Group could take place in December should the Platforma Secretariat moved on the bilateral agreement with the CPMR and the operationalization of activities.

#### **5. NEXT MEETING:**

We suggest to hold the next meeting on 10th December 2015 at 9am.