



**European Committee
of the Regions**

CIVEX-VI/043

138th plenary session, 11-12 February 2020

OPINION

Regions' and cities' contribution to the development of Africa

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- reiterates its support for the proposed Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) as a vital source of funding for targeted support for sustainable development; calls again for the establishment of specific programmes with their own budget – not only as part of the NDICI – aimed at supporting the work of EU cities and regions in the development field, including a range of long-term projects in Africa;
- is convinced that the establishment of such dedicated programmes could enable Europe's regions, cities, businesses and NGOs – as well as the citizens that belong to them – to increase their potential to be active in the promotion of sustainable development outside the EU, improve their knowledge of life in other parts of the world, notably in Africa and to develop business opportunities in the process;
- proposes that such programmes be based on calls for participation to regions with special emphasis on cross-border cooperation, in order to pool experience, human resources, and know-how;
- points out that some of the EU's outermost regions have close historical ties with Africa and experience in fields of interest to their neighbours; calls for opportunities for cross-border cooperation to be maximised, making the most flexible possible use of the opportunities provided by the next period within the framework of European territorial cooperation and the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI);
- supports the broadest possible contributions of cities and regions and their municipalities also in those EU Member States that do not currently maintain intensive development cooperation links with African countries;
- suggests that projects for sharing good practices, such as the CoR's Nicosia Initiative are a useful tool to build direct and concrete cooperation between EU and non-EU partners at local and regional level;
- calls for pilot projects and other related activities to be launched as soon as possible, as these are necessary for successful long-term assistance to African states, where it is possible, for political and security-related reasons, to reduce interest in irregular migration not only to the EU but also within Africa.

Rapporteur:

Robert Zeman (CZ/EPP), Councillor of Prachatice

Reference document

Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions – Regions' and cities' contribution to the development of Africa

I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

Background

1. recalls that sustainable development and successful development policy are dependent on, and affect, many other issues and policies, such as general support for the establishment of personal relationships and frameworks for cooperation between local and regional authorities, social and health policies, the management of migration, safety and security, support for sustainable economic development, notably for small and medium-sized enterprises, promoting the exchange of knowledge and good administration etc.; local and regional authorities are key players on many of these issues, both in the EU and outside it, and it is therefore of crucial importance to develop new ideas on how they can contribute to sustainable development, notably in Africa;
2. calls for a comprehensive approach on the part of the EU and stresses that, in order for the proposed measures to be successful, close cooperation with relevant partners in African countries and international institutions, such as the UNHCR¹ and the IOM², is imperative;
3. notes that large-scale economic and development-related cooperation is one way to tackle the root causes of migration to the EU; underlines that addressing the complex issue of migration with its multiple implications requires and will continue to require a significant amount of public resources in the EU. Such an approach could also help to reduce the negative social and security-related perceptions of migration towards the EU and to alleviate certain tensions in European societies which are fuelling political and social extremism;

Existing Committee of the Regions work and opinions

4. therefore recalls the significant work already carried out by the Committee of the Regions, and particularly the opinions drafted by Hans Janssen, Peter Bossman and Jesús Gamallo Aller³, and proposes the following ideas for reflection as well as some more concrete measures in order to improve people's lives and promote sustainable development in Africa, in order to contribute to reducing the pressures on individuals to migrate⁴;

1 <https://www.unhcr.org/>.

2 <https://www.iom.int/>.

3 Neighbourhood and the World, Hans Janssen, 2018; Asylum and Migration Fund, Peter Bossman, 2018; Migration on the Central Mediterranean Route, Hans Janssen, 2017; Partnership Framework on migration with third countries, Peter Bossman, 2017; Proposal for a new European Consensus on Development – Our World, our Dignity, our Future, Jesús Gamallo Aller, 2017; Protection of refugees in their areas of origin: a new perspective, Hans Janssen, 2016; A decent life for all: from vision to collective action, Hans Janssen, 2015.

4 Mo Ibrahim Foundation: https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/sites/default/files/2020-01/2019_Forum_Report_2.pdf.

5. reiterates its support for the proposed Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) as a vital source of funding for targeted support for sustainable development; calls again for the establishment of specific programmes with their own budget – not only as part of the NDICI⁵ – aimed at supporting the work of EU cities and regions in the development field, including a range of long-term projects in Africa. Such programmes could ideally be managed directly by regions from across the EU and would enable cities, municipalities, businesses and non-profit organisations from those regions to get involved in projects that aim to improve living standards in particular geographic areas, in line with the UN's SDGs⁶;
6. underlines that such programmes should be viewed as long-term in order to allow participants to commit to long-term involvement;
7. in order to encourage regions to participate in such programmes, notably those which do not already have particular experience in development cooperation, a system of incentives and technical support should be foreseen by the programmes;
8. is convinced that the establishment of such dedicated programmes could enable Europe's regions, cities, businesses and NGOs – as well as the citizens that belong to them – to increase their potential to be active in the promotion of sustainable development outside the EU, improve their knowledge of life in other parts of the world, notably in Africa and to develop business opportunities in the process;
9. proposes that such programmes be based on calls for participation to regions with special emphasis on cross-border cooperation, in order to pool experience, human resources, and know-how;
10. calls for such programmes to be as simple as possible from an administrative point of view;

Building personal relations and increasing capacities as a fundamental tool to support effective development cooperation

11. points out that some of the EU's outermost regions have close historical ties with Africa and experience in fields of interest to their neighbours; calls for opportunities for cross-border cooperation to be maximised, making the most flexible possible use of the opportunities provided by the next period within the framework of European territorial cooperation and the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI);
12. considers it crucial to harness the cooperation and alliances that the EU's municipalities and regions have with their African counterparts, with the aim of introducing an approach of consistency between policies, together with know-how concerning development and regional cooperation and innovation (in keeping with the Smart Specialisation Strategy);

⁵ Neighbourhood and the World, Hans Janssen, 2018.

⁶ UN SDGs: <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>.

13. stresses that it is essential for the long-term sustainability of projects to strengthen capacities as well as direct relationships between citizens as much as possible in order to ensure ownership of the projects by both parties and thus increase their impact on the citizens concerned;
14. believes that mobility, strengthening and expanding genuine partnership relations, initially through representatives and subsequently directly between residents of regions, cities and municipalities in both EU and African Union (AU) countries, is essential to ensure broad support for the implementation of such projects by the general public. Local authorities and bodies are among the most respected and legitimate political bodies when it comes to effectively implementing projects aimed at improving quality of life in Africa;
15. notes, based on the experience of its members, that active, diverse and sufficiently high-quality personal relationships between policy makers, civil society and citizens are essential as the basis for specific projects, as well as ensuring that such projects are sustainable and work well in the long term;
16. is convinced that providing good-quality information about the real lives of ordinary people in both the EU and Africa is an important tool that can reduce interest in irregular migration to Europe. This information should not only be provided via the media; awareness raising should also take place as much as possible through peer-to-peer relations, e.g. direct exchanges between local and regional authorities that can promote better mutual understanding of different cultural and socioeconomic realities and could improve the implementation of development projects which therefore need to be built up and financially supported;
17. supports the broadest possible contributions of cities and regions and their municipalities also in those EU Member States that do not currently maintain intensive development cooperation links with African countries; such contributions could lead to a broader, more diverse and more effective implementation of projects and activities to support sustainable development in African countries, while at the same time reinforcing the legitimacy of such cooperation in the eyes of the citizens of these Member States. Trilateral regional and local partnerships are also recommended for overcoming cultural and linguistic shortcomings;

A holistic approach to cooperation with African regions and municipalities as a basis for long-term success

18. stresses that transferring the experience of European local and regional authorities in addressing day-to-day tasks in direct territorial management and in cooperating with each other, notably across borders, combined with a holistic approach that is not limited to development cooperation, is an effective tool for improving living conditions in AU countries;
19. suggests, therefore, that projects for sharing good practices, such as the CoR's Nicosia Initiative are a useful tool to build direct and concrete cooperation between EU and non-EU partners at local and regional level⁷;

⁷ Nicosia Initiative: <https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/Pages/Libya.aspx>.

20. proposes that projects administered by EU regions should seek close partnerships with businesses, NGOs or experts from these regions, in cooperation with municipalities, their businesses, local African companies, organisations and workers. Such projects must be based on the SDGs⁸ (urban planning, water supply and treatment, waste management and its use in the circular economy, etc.) and respond to the needs of the communities in a flexible and long-term manner
21. is aware that the implementation of projects to promote sustainable development in Africa is highly complex, demanding and often risky; therefore, believes that additional instruments to support EU cities and regions in their cooperation projects, focused on the projects' sustainability, security and the promotion of joint activities that incentivise and stabilise their implementation in the long-term, should be created;
22. proposes that projects, the sharing of best practices and other activities should be aimed in particular at stabilising the situation of young people and the position of women in society⁹, whether as groups or individuals, including through peer-to-peer implementation, thus facilitating their personal development and increasing their confidence in a better future and hence their ability to contribute to the sustainability of their local environment;
23. considers SMEs to be at the heart of a modern, functioning and stable civil society, and therefore proposes – in addition to projects aimed at promoting SMEs in Africa – the implementation of activities such as internships in the EU, staff exchanges, the possible establishment of joint European and African companies, and any other activities that could lead to increased employment in small businesses;
24. is aware of the need not only to support local solutions in the areas of employment, entrepreneurship, health, environmental protection and other activities, but also to contribute to strengthening mutual trade, entrepreneurship and cooperation at international level;
25. notes that the aim of all activities is to help improve the lives of individuals, families and local communities, in order to promote the growth of the middle class as the cornerstone of a stable and healthy society;
26. recognises that the success of projects to support sustainable development should be assisted by information activities on experiences of the EU, its member states and their local and regional authorities that may be useful to the local partners. It is also important to identify local contact persons who can cooperate on the projects being implemented, or who can help young people, schools and relevant institutions to find suitable partners for sharing experiences, organising exchanges, etc.;

⁸ UN SDGs: <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>.

⁹ Mo Ibrahim Foundation; https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/sites/default/files/2020-01/2019_Forum_Report_2.pdf.

27. suggests using available communication technologies and social networks to disseminate the most reliable information possible in the broadest and most personalised way possible, based on official sources from the EU and its regions, in order to reduce the impact of misinformation and disinformation, both in the EU and on countries of Africa;
28. believes that enhanced relations and cooperation between regions of the EU and the AU can lead in the future to qualitatively better relations also at the level of the European and African Unions. A new, closer partnership among equals could facilitate other important forms of cooperation and progressive economic and social development, contributing also to a reduction of the pressure to migrate;

Pilot projects as a necessary element for putting into practice the theoretical framework of the opinion

29. underlines its conviction that the EU should think globally and act locally, and believes that the basic approach of this plan should always be bottom-up. This opinion therefore stresses the need to use the experience of European regional and local authorities, as well as those of businesses and experts to ensure the smooth implementation of activities and projects, in cooperation with their African counterparts;
30. the aim of the opinion is to promote as much as possible the sustainable development of society in the cities and local communities of African states, therefore, calls for pilot projects and other related activities to be launched as soon as possible, as these are necessary for successful long-term assistance to African states, where it is possible, for political and security-related reasons, to reduce interest in irregular migration not only to the EU but also within Africa.

Brussels, 12 February 2020

The President
of the European Committee of the Regions

Apostolos Tzitzikostas

The Secretary-General
of the European Committee of the Regions

Petr Bližkovský

II. PROCEDURE

Title	Regions' and Cities' contribution to the development of Africa
Reference(s)	–
Legal basis	Article 307(4) TFEU
Procedural basis	Own-initiative (Rule 41(b) ii))
Date of Council/EP referral/Date of Commission letter	–
Date of Bureau/President's decision	9 April 2019
Commission responsible	Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs (CIVEX)
Rapporteur	Robert Zeman (CZ/EPP)
Analysis	6 May 2019
Discussed in commission	25 June 2019
Date adopted by commission	14 November 2019
Result of the vote in commission (majority, unanimity)	Adopted by a majority
Date adopted in plenary	12 February 2020
Previous Committee opinions	–
Date of subsidiarity monitoring consultation	–