

PLATFORMA POLITICAL DECLARATION ON THE ROLE OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS IN THE NEXT MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK (MFF) AND EU EXTERNAL ACTION

On the occasion of the launch of European Commission's communication for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028–2034, we, as leaders of European Local and Regional Governments (LRGs), and their associations active in development cooperation, reaffirm our **unwavering commitment to continue working together for a free, democratic, prosperous, sustainable and competitive Europe for all citizens, both within and beyond our borders.**

We underscore the critical role of LRGs and their associations both in the Europe and in partner countries as actors for development, supporting with the delivery of a more impactful, flexible, and citizen-centred EU budget that upholds the values of subsidiarity and strengthens stability, multilevel governance, local economic prosperity, and global partnerships.

We express our deepest concern for the drastic reduction of development budgets across EU Member States as well as globally, and regret the rise of geopolitical tensions and volatility, increasing fragility, inequalities and economic turmoil.

Considering, the next EU mandate and negotiations for the long-term budget take place in a moment of mounting questions and pressures on the multilateral system, **the European Union must reinforce its capacity to act as an attractive and reliable partner amid a shifting landscape and new paradigm for its economic foreign policy.**

LRGs and their association both in the EU and in partner countries, play a crucial role in creating an enabling environment for local economic development, ensuring that EU external action is effective, targeted, and aligned with local realities. The presence of LRGs in fragile contexts and their ability to deliver services directly to communities in need, make them indispensable partners in promoting stability, democracy, and sustainable development.

Ahead of the next MFF negotiations, we call on EU leaders across Members States and the European Parliament to consider the following:

- 1. LRGs are essential assets for Team Europe in delivering the Global Gateway** – As the closest level of government to citizens, LRGs are best placed to implement sustainable, high-impact investments. LRGs must be directly involved in flagship projects, from identification to execution, to ensure long-term success and local ownership. The EU should fully integrate LRGs into the Global Gateway framework and the 360-degree approach, leveraging their networks, expertise, and decentralised cooperation to strengthen policy coherence and deliver tangible results.
- 2. Put LRGs in the driver seat of territorial development and prioritise capacity development, decentralisation and multilevel governance** – To secure the long-term sustainability of EU investments through amongst others, the Global Gateway, greater emphasis must be placed on strengthening local governments, decentralisation reforms and multilevel governance. Increasing technical support for LRGs will improve their access to funding, lending mechanisms, and investment planning. Strengthening ties with the private sector and using decentralised cooperation as a tool will further tailor funding to local realities. With a clear mandate, powers and responsibilities of all layers of government, it will be easier to work on transparency, accountability and predictability, with clear procedures and regulations. This will lead to greater sustainability of the investments done by the EU.



