

## **PLATFORMA Eastern Partnership programme under SGA 3 - concept note & work programme 2021-2023**

### **General Introduction**

### **European Neighbourhood Policy**

The EU policy towards the region is organised geographically through the Eastern Partnership, chapter of the **European Neighbourhood Policy**. The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is a joint initiative of the European Union (EU), its Member States and six neighbouring countries to the east: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – was first launched in 2009. In the same EaP framework the EU has also concluded Associations Agreements (AA), including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) with **Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine** in 2014, which came into force in 2016 in Georgia and Moldova and in 2017 in Ukraine. The AAs aim to improve political association and increase political dialogue.

The European Union (EU) is now entering into a new period 2021-2027, with renewed priorities with the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and a new instrument for the Eastern Neighbourhood. The new EaP policy beyond 2020 focuses on reinforcing resilience. The new long-term policy objectives have a customised approach and tailor-made partnerships. It means for instance, for the associated countries to engage in common initiatives related to their AAs and DCFTAs.

The main policy objectives are:

- a) 'Together for resilient, sustainable and integrated economies'
- b) 'Together for accountable institutions, the rule of law, and security'
- c) 'Together towards environmental and climate resilience'
- d) 'Together for a resilient digital transformation'
- e) 'Together for resilient, fair and inclusive societies'

The leaders of the EU, of the EU member states and of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries met for the sixth Eastern Partnership summit in Brussels on 15 December 2021 and endorsed the renewed EU-EaP agenda and ambitious Economic and Investment Plan. As an outcome of the Summit, [The Joint Declaration](#) was published. The document underlines the important role of Local self-governments. Priorities for LRGs include (i) achieving accountable, transparent and efficient public administration at all levels and the establishment of an Eastern Partnership Academy for Public Administration; (ii) promotion of gender equality and equal access to resources through systematic gender mainstreaming and gender responsive budgeting; (iii) Decentralisation efforts empowering local and regional self-government will be supported; (iv) Support for at least 50 municipalities will help them to respond better to complexity, adapt to uncertainty and climate change, and improve resilience; (v) strengthening the economic potential (including by digital means) of rural and coastal areas.

### **PLATFORMA Eastern Partnership programme**

PLATFORMA signed a Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) with the European Commission in 2015, through the Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO-became DG INTPA in 2021). Its signatories commit to take actions based on common values and objectives to tackle global poverty and inequalities, while promoting local democracy and sustainable development.

In the framework of the FPA, PLATFORMA has been implementing Specific Grant Agreement (SGA) programme with general objective to enhance capacities and engagement of EU local and regional

governments and their associations in decentralised cooperation, in partnership with peers in partner countries.

The SGA III (2021-2023) includes a strong component for the Neighbourhood East through Specific objectives in the SGA III: (i) Networking for action: Awareness-raising and capacity-building for local and regional governments and their associations as development policy actors; (ii) Networking for innovation: Improvement of current practice in decentralised cooperation; (iii) Networking for advocacy: Strengthening the voice of EU local and regional governments and their associations in EU development policy and global agendas.

PLATFORMA fully shares and advocates for the multilevel governance approach which is embedded in the EU treaties and is based on the principles of Subsidiarity – EU does not undertake a task that can be better implemented on - national, regional, or local levels of governance. Proximity – the member state should implement policies on the level of governance, which is closest to local population, and Partnership – policies should be implemented through cooperation of actors from European, national, regional and local levels and, therefore, decision-making should be “multi-level”.

Therefore, PLATFORMA continues to developing a multi-annual EaP framework programme with its partners from the European Union and Eastern Partnership countries (Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) in order to strengthen local democracy and to support AAs signatories to move along EaP objectives at the level of governance closest to the citizens.

## **Organisation of the Cluster**

PLATFORMA’s Eastern Partnership programme is conducted by Eastern Partnership Cluster and is aligned with European Union Neighbourhood East Policy. Therefore, there is a structural coherence to organise the cluster geographically as it facilitates coordination and the advocacy work. The Cluster represents the voice of EaP local and regional governments and their National Associations from countries signatories of DCFTAs (Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements) and AAs (Association Agreements): Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and their EU peers from PLATFORMA [partnership](#). This differentiates us in the EaP architecture (CORLEAP, EaP CSF).

The cluster is organised on a working group format and is meeting twice a year addressing the project implementation and the advocacy efforts, thus defining the priorities for the cluster and preparing the reporting for the Steering Committee.

The Eastern partnership cluster gathers activities focused on the area but also partners interested in the region. Therefore, all partners involve in the Eastern partnership can contribute to the cluster while a secretariat staff coordinate the actions.

Partners involved: AUC (AU); CALM (MD); NALAG (GE); LALRG (LV); ALAL (LT); AFCCRE (FR); VNGi (NL); NALAS; SALAR (SE), PARIS; CCRE; EUSKADI (Basque Country).

To support our advocacy work, two spokespersons can be nominated, one from the EU and the other from the EaP. One man, one woman.

## **General Objectives of the Cluster**

As a general objective, PLATFORMA with the SGA3 programme will continue to support increasing the autonomy and competences of local governments in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine through the strengthening of their national associations, by creating a political dialogue at local, national

and European levels, and facilitating capacity-building and peer-learning between EaP local and regional governments and national associations, with EU peers.

In this regard, the EaP Cluster will (i) coordinate Cluster members in their organisation to implement SGAIII EaP related activities (ii) follow-up and monitor EU-EaP policy (iii) strengthen EaP partners in their advocacy and capacity-building activities

### **Specific Objectives of the Cluster**

- Promote multilevel policy dialogue between LRGs and its associations, national governments and EU Institutions
- Supporting the institutional development of EaP Local Government Associations
- Reinforce the role of local governments as policymakers and decision-makers through their national associations
- Support and monitor decentralisation and local public administration reforms in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine
- Exchange experiences and learn from peers
- Localising the EU and global agendas: EU-EaP new programming (2021-2027) and AAs, SDGs
- Active monitoring and informing of EU Development Policies and Programming processes, and dissemination to local and regional governments associations and local and regional governments across Europe
- Active advocacy for the role of cities and regions from EaP AAs countries for national and European development policy - Pave the way for enhanced cooperation with DG NEAR after 2021

As final **outcomes** PLATFORMA EaP Cluster expects to:

- (a) Build a cooperation framework on local level which would support institutional reforms in EaP countries such as public administration and decentralisation processes in order to reinforce local democracy.
- (b) Strengthening the competences of the local public servants in EaP countries.
- (c) Strengthening National Associations of LRGs' role in decision-making processes.
- (d) Increase the capacity building of the EaP AAs associations and increase their political visibility at national, EU and global level
- (e) Understanding of key success and failure factors in EU-EaP partnerships on local level to consider in future planning and programs.
- (f) Achieve a policy coherence and alignment with local, national, European and global agendas

### **Timeline of cluster meetings (tbc)**

Meeting #1 16 November 2021

Meeting #2 5-6 May 2022

Meeting #3 November 2022

Meeting #4 May 2023

### **Target groups**

- Local and regional governments

- Associations of local and regional governments

### Target countries

- Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine
- EU member states

### Work Plan 2021-2023

Output	Actions in cluster group	Lead	Timeline
<b>EU-EaP Local Leaders' Forum</b>	<i>Active participation in the activity</i> Mobilise speakers Invite participants Disseminate follow- up information: LLF 1 <a href="#">recommendations</a> Share good practices	NALAS/ALAL/LALRG/Secretariat	LLF1 2021/12/07  LLF2 2022 or 2023
<b>Seminar between EaP and French municipalities- Capacity building and expertise sharing</b>	<i>Active participation in the activity</i> Mobilise speakers Invite participants Disseminate follow- up information Share good practices	AFCCRE / Secretariat	2022
<b>Study visits for EaP countries' local politicians and experts</b>	<i>Active participation in the activity</i> Identify and Invite participants Disseminate follow- up information Share good practices	ALAL / Secretariat	2022-2023
<b>Gender Equality trainings/support to signatories in EaP countries</b>	<i>Active participation in the activity</i> Identify and Invite participants Disseminate follow- up information Share good practices	CEMR/ Secretariat	2022 -2023
<b>EDLS campaign between LAs from EaP and Latvia</b>	<i>Active participation in the activity</i> Identify and Invite participants Disseminate follow- up information Share good practices	LALRG	2022
<b>Webinars Localising SDGs and EU Agenda in EaP countries</b>	<i>Active participation in the activity</i> Mobilise speakers Invite participants Disseminate follow- up information Share good practices	LALRG/ Secretariat	2022 -2023
<b>2 national stakeholder dialogues with national governments and European institutions as well as interested/involved PLATFORMA members</b>	<i>Active participation in the activity</i> Mobilise speakers Invite participants Disseminate follow- up information Share good practices	NALAS	October 2022 February 2023
<b>3 Peer exchanges Supporting the institutional development of EaP LGA Association</b>	Mobilise speakers Invite participants Disseminate follow- up information Share good practices	NALAS	April 2022 October 2022 February 2023

<b>Publication / Survey on Local Development Needs and Priorities in the Eastern Partnership</b>	<i>Respond Survey Disseminate follow- up information Share good practices</i>	NALAS	May – October 2022
<b>Organising Meetings representatives from the Member States-EUD, the European Commission DG NEAR and the European Parliament to discuss the position of LRGs regarding the implementation of the EU-EaP policy agenda</b>	<i>Active participation in the activity Mobilise speakers Invite participants Disseminate follow- up information Share good practices</i>	Secretariat	2022-2023
<b>Draft a thematic note on EaP including joint EaP policy strategy</b>	<i>Active Contribution to the task</i>	Secretariat	2022
<b>Provide amendments to the European Parliament reports on EaP country Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine</b>	<i>Active Contribution to the task</i>	Secretariat	2022-2023
<b>Organising meetings with the Committee of the Regions- CORLEAP and collaborate with their work: Ukraine working group and EaP reports</b>	<i>Active Contribution to the task</i>	Secretariat	2022-2023
<b>Create a database on the EaP-EU decentralised cooperation projects</b>	<i>Active Contribution to the task Share good practices with secretariat</i>	Secretariat	2022
<b>Organising meetings with EaP Civil Society Forum and apply to become an EaP CSF Delegate</b>	<i>Active Contribution to the task Share good practices in collaboration with CSOs</i>	Secretariat	2022