

ARLEM POSITION PAPER
ON
THE JOINT CONSULTATION DOCUMENT: *TOWARDS A NEW NEIGHBOURHOOD*
***POLICY*, ISSUED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THE HIGH**
REPRESENTATIVE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY POLICY

The Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) represents the territorial dimension of governance within the Union for the Mediterranean, ensuring institutional and political representation for the local and regional authorities along the three shores of the Mediterranean and supporting the implementation of European policy in the area of its southern neighbours.

ARLEM welcomes the joint initiative by the European Commission and the European External Action Service, which launches an in-depth review of European Neighbourhood Policy. It calls for an extensive review of the strategic policy for the EU and its neighbours in the southern and eastern Mediterranean.

ARLEM highlights the need for European Neighbourhood Policy and missions undertaken by the Union for the Mediterranean to complement one another, in order to enhance regional cooperation. Similarly it underlines the added value gained from greater synergies with European development policy and the agenda for migration.

ARLEM supports taking a differentiated and balanced approach towards the southern and eastern components of this policy, enabling it to adapt its objectives and resources in accordance with the diversity of the partner countries. It calls for the creation of synergies with other structural policies and financial instruments in order to ensure the optimal use of financial resources. This will guarantee that the investment drive for sustainable socio-economic development in the region generates a real leveraging effect.

In ARLEM's view, this review should refocus the policy on three strategic priorities:

- proper democratic governance;
- sustainable territorial development;
- circular migration and mobility;

ARLEM points out that LRAs are crucial to the success of European Neighbourhood Policy and – in order to strengthen ownership of the policy – believes that this reform should adopt a territorial

approach, based on the principles of subsidiarity and multilevel governance. As such it should envisage that the concepts of decentralisation and "territorialisation" be incorporated into the mainstreaming process.

ARLEM proposes that a macro-regional approach be introduced gradually to the Mediterranean region and believes that European Neighbourhood Policy should incorporate methodologies, concepts and instruments from the European Cohesion Policy. It should also offer the opportunity for Mediterranean partner countries to participate in the European Structural Programmes on a progressive basis.

ARLEM asks in particular that support for the process of decentralisation be reflected in the strategic objectives of this policy, including fiscal decentralisation, which is essential for ensuring proper democratic governance. Given the importance of strengthening the institutions of local bodies and of consolidating the competences of reformed public administrations at all levels, ARLEM calls for the continuation and extension of the Local Administration Facility (LAF) to all LRAs in the Mediterranean partner countries.

ARLEM urges that the role of LRAs be strengthened in both the action plans and the indicative plans established under the bilateral component of the European Neighbourhood Policy, with the aim of promoting a territorial (and not merely sectoral) approach to distributing aid within the national plans.

ARLEM believes that support for cross-border and interregional cooperation should be given particular priority. This will enable LRAs to benefit from real opportunities to implement joint programmes and projects, designed through partnerships, including those modelled on the European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC).

ARLEM believes that this reform, which is urgent given the recent developments in the southern neighbourhood, should lead to a significant reworking of the policy concept. It should become fully effective through the implementation of specific projects which are further promoted at grassroots level by an inclusive approach involving local and regional authorities and civil society, and made recognisable through a decentralised communication policy.
