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French Guidelines for the International Action of Local Authorities



MINISTÈRE
DES
AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES
ET EUROPÉENNES



“ “ Local authorities are an important part of France’s development policy as they provide the necessary regional base and staff to undertake concrete and sustainable projects to serve communities. ” ”

Henri de Raincourt

Minister responsible for Cooperation, attached to the *ministre d’État*, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs

“ “ *The idea of putting forward a State strategy regarding orientations for decentralised cooperation and, more generally, action undertaken abroad by local and regional authorities may seem both somewhat ambiguous and somewhat ambitious.*

Somewhat ambiguous because autonomous management of local and regional authorities is enshrined in the French Constitution: the law since 1992 – and to an even greater extent since the “Thiollière” law was passed in 2007 – recognises that local and regional authorities have the freedom and authority to develop cooperative relations with other foreign local authorities.

Somewhat ambitious at the same time because this cooperation is extremely diverse, not only in terms of the subjects it addresses, but also in terms of the stakeholders it mobilises and the geography covered.

There is a very strong consensus in France on the complementary role of the State and local and regional authorities when it comes to international relations. This is thanks to a strong tradition of dialogue between the State and national associations of elected officials.

It is against such a backdrop that this document has been drafted.

This is an overview that will enable the reader to better understand and define decentralised cooperation. France is in fact the first country to come up with an Atlas of Decentralised Cooperation which lists the various initiatives undertaken by its local and regional authorities around the world. France’s Atlas is also contributing to the creation of a European Atlas on which the European Commission has begun to work.

Furthermore, this document illustrates the strong political will that France has manifested over the last few years to garner international recognition of the role that local authorities play in development policies and the importance of local governance for the Millennium Development Goals. It underscores the fact that decentralised cooperation can be a marvellous tool not only for making technical contributions, but also by spreading the political message of enhanced governance and local democracy.

In Europe, France has been very active in furthering the position of local authorities in development policies, be it in the European Council, notably during the French Presidency, in the Committee of the Regions or the European Parliament. ” ”



Antoine Joly

Local Authorities
International Activities Delegate



Christian Masset

Director General for Globalisation,
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The challenges

Strengthening decentralised cooperation

In 2006 an initial document entitled *Orientations for Decentralised Cooperation* was drafted, upon the initiative of the Prime Minister, which was subsequently brought to the attention of the associations of local elected officials represented in the National Commission of Decentralised Cooperation (CNCD in its French initials). Among other functions, the CNCD helps bolster decentralised cooperation, providing a forum where the associations of local authorities and the administrations of the State can meet on an equal footing.

France's elected officials welcomed this effort to clarify the State's strategies, especially in terms of priority concerns and geography, so that they could freely conduct convergent or complementary initiatives.

The growing role of local authorities in the face of global challenges

Given **the growing importance accorded to partnerships these days in the face of global challenges, it is pleasing to see the increasing role of local authorities**, in the North and in the South, and the need to establish **renewed partnerships**, not only with emerging countries but also with France's long-established interlocutors in Africa, around the Mediterranean rim, in the French-speaking world and in areas neighbouring our French overseas local authorities.

It was in light of these developments that the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MAEE) created a Directorate General for Global Affairs, Development and Partnerships (DGM in French). Attached to this is the Local Authorities International Activities Delegation (known as the DAECT) which is home to the CNCD's Secretariat.

These orientations have been the subject of broad consultation within the CNCD at the State level (via the Ministers concerned; the French Development Agency, AFD; and Culturesfrance) as well as through the national representative associations of local authorities (Association of French Mayors, Regions of France, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, the French Départements Assembly and Cités Unies France).

WHAT IS DECENTRALISED COOPERATION?

France is considered a pioneer when it comes to international activities by local authorities:

- Decentralised cooperation covers the whole gamut of international cooperation activities undertaken by local authorities: twinning, twinning-cooperation, development projects, technical exchanges, economic promotion operations (private sector start-up assistance, support for economic stakeholders, micro-credits, etc.).
- Since it is an effective and relevant instrument, decentralised cooperation **mobilises all kinds of local bodies**, who have much experience in local management of collective public services. Local authorities can offer significant technical and methodological support to their partners while involving all the various stakeholders operating locally (networks of associations, professional bodies, hospitals, etc.).



The objectives

● **To encourage decentralised cooperation** in terms of development of local authorities, focussing on the area of local governance and economic development (including agriculture and food security), through requests for project proposals. To seek contracting partnerships between local authorities and AFD, which tailors its modus operandi so as to facilitate these partnerships.

● **To offer priority support to decentralised cooperation** in the areas where France is specialised: sub-Saharan Africa, the Mediterranean and French-speaking areas; to foster regional approaches that could cover several countries in the area (Niger River, the Balkans, etc.).

THE FRENCH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (AFD)

For more than sixty years, AFD, which operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MAEE), has been working to combat poverty and foster development in countries of the South and in French Overseas Territories.

AFD aims to boost partnerships between local bodies in France and their counterparts in the South and encourage the development of the latter. Whenever the Agency initiates a project, it ensures that the French local body which is already a partner to the local body for which the project is designed is as closely involved as possible. If the recipient local body has not yet entered into a partnership with a French counterpart, AFD identifies one that could offer pertinent support. AFD signs partnership agreements with those French local bodies that are strongly involved in decentralised cooperation.



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● **To integrate this decentralised cooperation** into a development approach centred on local-level progress, since sub-national areas (regions, metropolitan areas, hub-cities, rural communities) are deemed relevant and recognised as drivers of land planning strategies, economic development and social cohesion; to recognise the reciprocal nature of this cooperation so that input from all partners and the contribution made by communities from these partner countries can be incorporated into the search for solutions to the challenges faced by French cities and districts.

● **To recognise and utilise the expertise and know-how** of our communities, their elected officials and administrators, by focussing on institutional strengthening, sustainable territorial development (Agenda 21), local public finances, training and services for citizens. To promote solutions that take their inspiration from France but which are tailored to the partners' situations.

AFD AND MULHOUSE WORKING TOWARD THE RESTORATION OF THE MAHAJANGA MARKETS (MADAGASCAR)

The Mahajanga market restoration project experience illustrates that participation by French communities and their local elected officials can offer visibility to citizens and enable technical assistance, particularly appreciated by stakeholders from the Madagascan local bodies.

The approach is a long-term one and the partnership between local bodies from the Alsace region and from Mahajanga aims not only to rehabilitate the markets themselves, but also to modernise the way that the markets, and municipal affairs more generally, are managed. The involvement of a regional structure – the Alsatian Regional Cooperation-Development Institute (IRCOD) – in order to mutualise resources and skills was one of the key factors in the project's success. Support from the City of Mulhouse played a decisive role in terms of political dialogue, and the same is true for the "trades mentoring" and skill transfer.



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CULTURESFRANCE: CULTURAL EXPERTISE AT THE SERVICE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Culturesfrance has been making its expertise available to local authorities for the last fifteen years through framework-setting agreements for joint initiatives relating to international projects. There are 23 such partnerships currently in operation.

Any artistic discipline, and indeed any of the programmes and projects of Culturesfrance could be called upon, notably as part of the Cultural Seasons abroad and in France. The cost of funding these agreements is borne equally by the signatory partners.

Culturesfrance also offers a variety of services, ranging from feasibility studies to the actual organisation of international cultural events.

- **To ensure that the commitments** stemming from the European Development Cooperation Charter in Support of Local Governance (2008) turn into concrete results.

- **To dovetail local authorities' international activities** with France's bilateral action in emerging countries with which France has a strategic partnership, favouring a mode of reciprocity built around the issues of sustainable development and the dual notion of France's ability to "influence-attract" – in connection, also, with Invest in France (IFA).

- **To put France's European commitment into practice**, in intra-Community relations (or intra-continental relations), especially as regards cross-border cooperation, and making greater use of European funding; to take into consideration the specific role played by French regional bodies overseas in their geographical areas.



Central Bangkok (Thailand) © Olivier Culmann/Tendance Floue



● **To strengthen France's economic presence**, focusing on local authorities' specific scope of activities and comparative advantages, in association with the Ministry of State for Foreign Trade and the agency for international trade, Ubifrance.

● **To mobilise the cultural diversity of French regions**, supporting the activities of their communities and elected officials in favour of international cultural exchanges, in partnership with the future Cultural Agency which should offer a framework of consultation and long-term joint action with local authorities.

FOUR FRENCH LOCAL BODIES WORKING TOGETHER IN SENEGAL

A mutualised development cooperation project with the town of Saint-Louis involves participation by four local authorities in France and four partner counterparts in Senegal: the Nord-Pas-de-Calais Region and the Saint-Louis Region; the Nord Département and the communities from the Département of Dagana; the city of Lille and the town of Saint-Louis; the municipality of Saint-Laurent Blangy and that of Rosso.

The objectives:

- to support the local authorities of the Saint-Louis Region in municipal management and urban social development;
- to contribute to the emergence of structured civil society stakeholders, which are representative and capable of being project leaders;
- to improve access to basic public services (health, education and social services).

Institutional support in the fields of economic development, management of basic social and cultural-youth services and Francophonie make up the core of this cooperation effort. Thanks to the coordination of the activities, this programme has made the project more consistent and effective.



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SUSTAINABLE ORGANIC COTTON IN MALI AND BURKINA FASO IN COLLABORATION WITH THE BRITTANY REGION

This project for promoting and structuring a sustainable organic cotton industry in Mali and Burkina Faso is designed to deliver on three objectives:

- to participate in the development of sustainable organic cotton production
- to help enhance the value of production (installation of small-scale processing units)
- to foster a global approach to the development of new markets, especially by using distributors in Brittany as a foothold

The development of this sustainable organic cotton industry is mutually beneficial: in Africa, via economic development, creation of employment, the positive impact expected on living conditions, the environment, health and education; in Brittany through a stable supply, in terms of quantity and quality, and employment in organic cotton industrial and distribution firms.

Assistance for the shift from conventional to organic cultivation, training, support for production activities and certification enabled the formation of a network of Breton manufacturers who are committed to procuring their organic cotton supply from West Africa and practising fair trade. The MAEE's share of the co-funding amounted to 100,000 euros out of the project's total cost of 300,000 euros.



© Region of Brittany



A strategy tailored to partner countries

There are four distinct types of orientation, depending on the countries, in France's decentralised cooperation strategy:

- **With developing countries** at the heart of local bodies' action in terms of development aid, France is revitalising its approach to decentralised cooperation. France favours support for local governance, local economic development, self-sufficient agriculture, and capacity building, generally, of relevant local authorities for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.
- **With countries in which France does not have major commitments**, but where there is demand from local partners France maintains a more selective, legible presence, in more clearly defined areas of action, favouring areas of excellence of local government (water, sanitation, heritage, cultural engineering, bridging the digital divide, vocational training).
- **With emerging countries**, priority is given to innovation, to sustainable development, to climate-related endeavours, and to university and economic cooperation in the framework of partnerships.
- **With European bodies and local government bodies from developed countries more generally**, France aims to breathe new life into existing cooperation and twinning initiatives through the exchange of best practices, partnerships with civil society and economic cooperation. France is also developing context-specific strategies for newly-neighbouring countries and the Mediterranean area, bolstering the dynamics that are characteristic of cross-border cooperation.

THE FRENCH ATLAS OF DECENTRALISED COOPERATION

This Atlas itemises all the international activities undertaken by French local authorities (decentralised cooperation – including twinning – as well as one-off initiatives and non-contractually agreed initiatives). To date, the list includes nearly 12,000 decentralised cooperation projects, run by 4,755 French local authorities with 9,700 partner counterparts in 139 countries. This Atlas is an outstanding awareness-raising and working tool, conducive to enhancing synergies.

Thanks to an easy-to-use browsing function, the Atlas enables the user to search by continent, by country, by region, by département and by local body. The user may also obtain details about the projects undertaken and access numerous practical e-services if using the section reserved for professionals (search engine, pdf data extraction, map registration, etc.).

The Atlas can be found at:
www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/cncd

Working together

- **The aim is to streamline the relations between the State and local authorities** regarding their international commitments, through renewed and deeper dialogue with the local body representative associations and networks; to ensure that this dialogue is factored into a comprehensive, cross-cutting, multi-level and multi-partner region-based approach.
- **To better connect local authorities, early in the process, to national strategies** designed to tackle global challenges (climate change, water, the digital divide, food, international youth mobility, etc.), and to prepare bilateral or multilateral negotiations when local and regional development is affected;
- **To bolster the consistency and legibility of any action undertaken**, by regularly updating information tools such as the Atlas of Decentralised Cooperation,

which could include a database of good practice and innovative projects; to strengthen coordination between local bodies – including European ones – located in the same area to ensure enhanced application of the Paris Declaration principles (voir les liens ci-dessous), and improve the coordination function of the Embassy for all of France's action abroad; encourage the set-up of a multi-stakeholder thematic platforms based on initial experience (water, towns, tourism, digital divide).

Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/53/38/34579826.pdf>

Accra Agenda for Action:

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/58/17/41202027.pdf>

SUPPORT FOR NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF ELECTED OFFICIALS

So as to streamline the relationship between the State and local authorities and to promote coordination and consistency, the Local Authorities International Activities Delegation has the support of many national networks which federate the local authorities involved in decentralised cooperation (Association of French Mayors, Assembly of French Départements, Association of the Regions of France, Cités Unies France and the French Association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions).

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR DECENTRALISED COOPERATION

The CNCD is the preferred instrument for dialogue between the State and local authorities. Chaired by the Prime Minister and, in his absence, by the Minister of State for Cooperation, the CNCD is made up, in equal proportions, of representatives of national local body associations and all of the Ministries concerned. On 6 July, under the Chairmanship of Bernard Kouchner, and in the presence of Anne-Marie Idrac, the CNCD approved the strategic guidelines for local authorities' international action.



Opening of the decentralised cooperation conference by Bernard Kouchner the 6th of July 2010
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The MAEE's six commitments

Commitment 1

To ensure that the international action of local authorities is secure...

... with the passing of the Oudin-Santini law in 2005, local bodies and the clusters to which they belong can earmark up to 1% of their budget to international solidarity and cooperation activities. Furthermore, under the 2007 Thiollière law there is no longer any obligation for cooperation between French local bodies and their foreign counterparts to meet the requirement of local interest. Moreover, a 2009 European directive established European Groupings for Territorial Cooperation.

Commitment 2

To foster coordination and mutualisation...

... through co-funding of mutualised projects, through innovative on-line tools (on-line formalities, French Atlas and project listings of decentralised cooperation), through support for regional and national networks (country groups within Cités Unies France, etc.) and for multi-stakeholder thematic platforms (via "in the field" coordination using France's diplomatic network).

Commitment 3

To offer spaces for dialogue...

... within the National Commission of Decentralised Cooperation and projects with a geographical focus

(China, India, Brazil, emerging countries) and thematic focus (migrants, university cooperation, books and reading, youth and twinning-cooperation, etc.).

Commitment 4

To co-finance with absolute transparency...

...with annual or three-yearly on-line calls for project proposals favouring mutualisation and coordination among local authorities, on clear, negotiated priority issues. This new provision fosters institutional support, sustainable development, economic development and the integration of young people.

Commitment 5

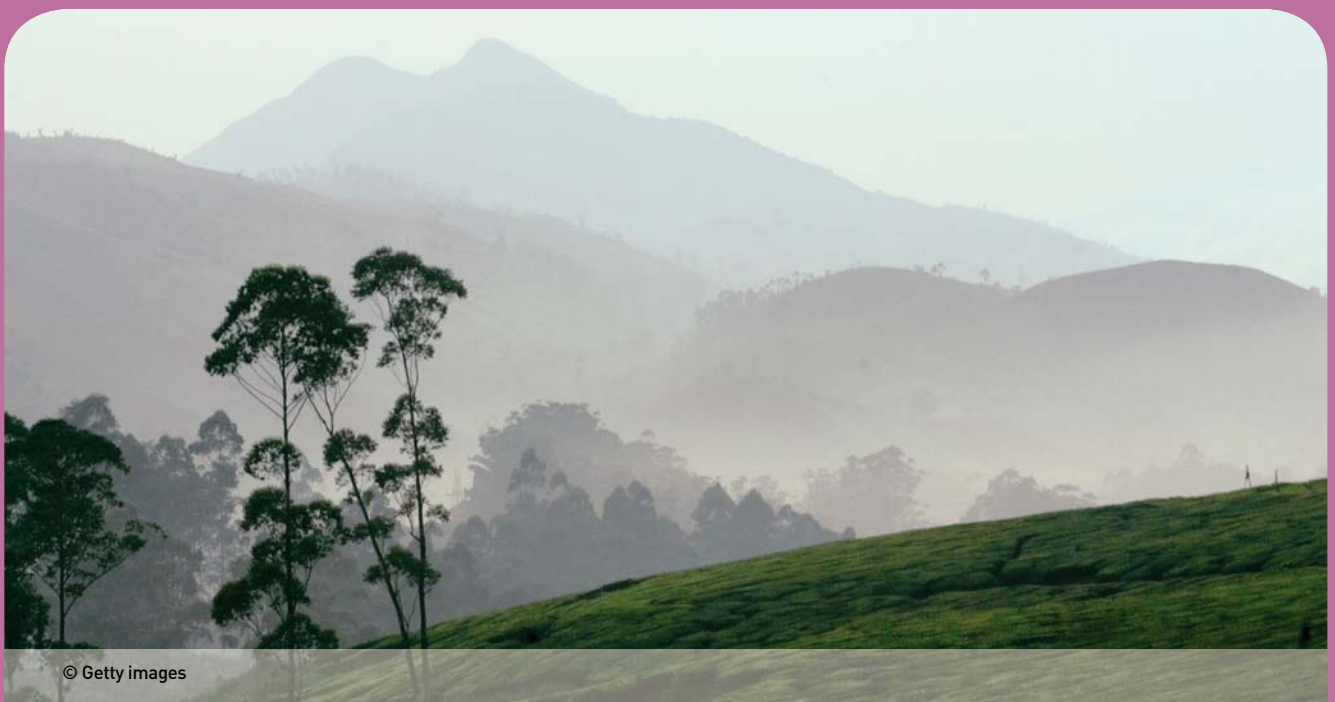
To encourage the emergence of local authorities on the international scene

The MAEE lobbies the European Union and international bodies, advocating the recognition of decentralised cooperation for development and the relevance of a region-based approach to development.

Commitment 6

To support decentralisation processes and the improvement of local governance

Local authorities' international action carries with it the message of decentralisation and the enhancement of local governance. With the EU, the MAEE defends the role of local and regional authorities in development before international organisations.



This document was produced in consultation with the members of the National Commission of Decentralised Cooperation (CNCD).



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The missions of the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs are:

- summarize information on the changing global economy and put it into perspective, prepare decisions on the French government's foreign policy,
- draft France's foreign policy,
- coordinate France's international relations,
- protect French interests abroad and assist French nationals outside France.

The creation of the Directorate-General of Global Affairs, Development and Partnerships (DGM) in April 2009, as part of the reform of the Ministry, enables diplomacy to anticipate, identify and respond to the challenges of globalisation more effectively.

Confronted with global issues that have a direct impact on the lives of our citizens and multiple actors, the Ministry intends to emphasise the need to tackle global issues, in the firm belief that every major economic, cultural and societal issue calls for collective action with more outward focus, anticipation, interministerial coordination, responsiveness, interdisciplinarity and a resolutely European approach.



Directorate for Communication and the Spokesperson's Office

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