



Título: Euro-Latin-American cities network exceeds expectations in first year

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Euro-Latin-American cities network exceeds expectations in first year

Mexico City heads a dynamic team of Latin American cities and European local governments networks aiming at the professionalization of their international policies.

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In May 2013 the Euro-Latin-American Alliance of Cooperation among Cities, (the AL-LAs Project) is born. The network is based on a strategic approach that emphasizes the international role of cities as a means of innovation in a global context.

With the financial support of the European Union AL-LAs gathers Latin American and European partners to discuss, analyse and propose new formulas to internationalize local governments. The Government of Mexico City coordinates the project in partnership with six other Latin-American cities: Montevideo (Uruguay), Morón (Argentina), Belo Horizonte (Brazil), Quito (Ecuador), Medellín (Colombia) and Lima (Peru) as well as two European local government networks: United Cities of France (CUF) and the Andalusian Fund of Municipalities for International Solidarity (FAMSI).

From more than a decade, cities and their local partners have been decisively influencing the new international agenda in several topics. Traditional approaches are being revisited. Vertical North-South cooperation and paternalistic development aid policies have proved insufficient and inadequate to meet the challenge. The internationalization of cities is no longer limited to the old and traditional vision of city twinning and decentralised cooperation. The AL-LAs network is thus setting a new mind frame to help cities rethink their role in the world and act accordingly.

With only one year of existence AL-LAs has already identified a trend of important changes in the way cities think and operate their international relations:

In the first place, internationalization is no longer limited to cooperation but, more than ever, to territorial appeal and external promotion. Instead of aid, mayors are looking for investments, business, tourism, cultural, academic and scientific exchanges, big events and global media attention.

Secondly, whereas decentralised cooperation treated traditional topics like provision of basic services (water, sanitation, transport, etc.), lately the international relations of cities have focused on institutional capacity building, lobbying and advocacy in global negotiations concerning pressing issues like climate change, natural risk management, urban development financing, drug trafficking and migration, among others.



Thirdly, the particular will of the mayor or elected authority in office no longer defines the international relations of cities. External activities are becoming a specific public policy of local government, with dedicated portfolios, budgets and multiannual planning, based on specific rules and regulations. Debates in city halls about world issues are commonplace and public opinion is beginning to monitor the city's international activity, its expenses and its results.

The AL-LAs project is preparing cities to meet this fast changing international environment, in particular in the Euro-Latin-American region. In order to do so, AL-LAs has set itself a number of tasks. Concretely, AL-LAs will:

1. Review the **legal and institutional framework** that encompasses the international relations of Latin American cities;
2. Help adapt **the administrative, organizational and communication structures** of the cities' International Relations Departments;
3. Organize public **consultations with civil society** and other actors in order to draft multiannual plans for the cities' international strategy;
4. Support the creation of a **Euro-Latin American Community of Experts**, specialized officials and researchers working in the internationalization of local government, by means of a dedicated knowledge-management website (www.proyectoallas.net);
5. Offer **training sessions and on-line training** with graduate university certification;
6. Implement **media and citizen awareness campaigns** about the role of cities in the world;
7. Develop **lobbying and advocacy policies** as well as concrete initiatives so that cities can contribute to shape the global agenda;
8. Support **concrete cooperation projects** among partner cities in 3 priority subjects: **Urban sustainability, Inclusive cities and Attractive cities.**

AL-LAs is the leading network for innovation in cities that want to be more active in the international arena. In addition to its city partners, AL-LAs is supported by the Association of Departments of International Affairs in the Federated States of Mexico (AMAIE), the Association of International Affairs Officers of French Local Governments (ARRICOD), the Embassy of France in Mexico (IFAL) and the Universidad del Rosario in Colombia.

Lately other important allies and local governments have joined forces with AL-LAs: the City of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), the Government of Yucatán (Mexico), the Province of Barcelona (Spain), the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), the Instituto de Investigaciones José María Luis Mora in Mexico, ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability), the Global Fund for Cities Development (FMDV), the National Forum of International Affairs Secretaries of Brazilian Local Governments (FONARI), the South American MERCOCIUDADES network, among other important actors working in the Euro-Latin American urban agenda.

In its first year of existence AL-LAs has succeeded in creating and developing of a strong Euro-Latin American network of cities and institutions with both technical-operational capacities, and political clout to impulse a new international agenda for local and regional governments. Likewise, as a coordinated network, AL-LAs has positioned itself as a unique knowledge hub in the field of "external action of local governments".



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In conclusion, AL-LAs is re-thinking the way in which cities position themselves in the global arena; creating new ways to strengthen their international policies, to make them more strategic, less incidental, better planned and more professional. AL-LAs is thus contributing to design a new international order, more local, more horizontal and more collaborative.

More information:

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