

Cités Unies France in Brief

Cités Unies France (CUF) is a federation of French local authorities involved in international relations and, in particular, in decentralized co-operation. It includes all French members of the United Towns Organisation (UTO).

Cités Unies France was created in 1975; its president is Mr. Bernard STASI, who is also Delegate-President of UTO.

Cités Unies France aims at promoting local democracy, peace, international solidarity, and a strong and genuine participation of the population in local affairs.

Globalisation, the major challenge we are facing today, requires new actions and initiatives. Local authorities have to create an "interface" between the local and the global levels. Cités Unies France considers that towns and cities involved in international partnerships and decentralized co-operation, may have a real and significant impact on local life.

For example: participating in international co-operation is a great opportunity for openness of the youth; having immigrant populations involved in partnerships between local authorities is an important vector for integration; integrating international co-operation within a local development project federates its participants.

Since 1992, the French legislation has authorized all local authorities to sign agreements with foreign local authorities, provided that they do not conflict with French national commitments.

A substantial and growing number of local and regional authorities are involved in this new mode of action: thousands of partnerships exist with over one hundred countries throughout the world.

Within the field of international co-operation, Cités Unies France provides information and advice, organises working groups on specific issues, and offers training courses to French local authorities. It also co-ordinates more than twenty « country-groups », bringing together French local authorities to facilitate the exchange of information and experiences, and foster a closer co-operation between its members. These « country-groups » contribute to a better understanding of the cultural, social, economic, and political environment of their foreign counterparts.

Cités Unies France maintains a close working relation with French national authorities (it has signed a three-year agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), French NGOs, several institutions in the field of international co-operation, and, last but not least, the European Commission.

Given the substantial number, within UTO, of French local authorities, Cités Unies France intends to play a full role in the unification process of IULA and UTO. In this respect, Cités Unies France has started several months ago to build closer links with the French Association of the European Council of Municipalities and Regions (AF-CCRE, French representative in IULA).

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