



**PLATFORMA**

The European voice of **Local** and  
**Regional** authorities for development

# Fighting inequalities with the local and regional perspective

## Revising the European Consensus on Development

Since its creation in 2008, PLATFORMA has been the voice of European local and regional governments active in decentralised cooperation – the town to town, region to region development cooperation, closer to citizens and more effective.

PLATFORMA's role is to increase recognition of the work of local and regional governments in international cooperation, deepen the dialogue with European institutions and promote effective decentralised cooperation for the development of partner countries.

In 2015, PLATFORMA signed a Strategic partnership with the European Commission Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), whereby signatories commit to take actions based on common values and objectives to tackle global poverty and inequality, and to promote democracy and sustainable development.

The Secretariat of PLATFORMA is hosted by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).

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## This complex world requires coherent policies and a local perspective in any strategy

The revision of the European Consensus on Development comes at a time when the international community has fully recognised – through the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – the complex and interconnected nature of global challenges and public goods. The European Union must seize the opportunity to re-think its global development strategy and objectives. So far, the main goal of EU development policy has been to reduce poverty. It is now time to move to a more integrated approach and **focus on reducing all inequalities**: wealth, health, gender, employment, education, opportunities; inequalities in access to public services and spaces, and in the exercise of democracy.

The new Consensus must include **stronger support for effective democratic governance at all levels**. Democratic governance is understood as the exercise of legitimate authority (in concertation with multiple stakeholders) to decide on common priorities and goals, to act accordingly and to account for the results. (Local) governments are a pivotal actor that drive governance processes and, ideally, enables multiple stakeholders to engage in the process.

Inequalities are both at the root of and the consequence of a complex and interconnected global reality. This complexity requires advanced governance capacities. At the level of public policy, tackling inequalities requires a new approach to ensure coherence across policy sectors and stakeholders, via partnerships. The importance of effective and democratic governance for sustainable development and coherence has been widely recognised (i.e. in the Rio +20 declaration, Art. 76) as is the need for empowered government institutions at all levels (i.e. Habitat II, Art. 45). This approach should be based on two pillars:

### **First pillar: the integration of the local perspective in all sectors and levels of government** (pp. 18-28)

Inequalities become daily realities at the local level and it is increasingly understood that global phenomena are rooted in local realities. Inequalities can no longer be measured or tackled in a meaningful way at country level alone. A strong local and regional perspective in development policies will create the necessary pre-conditions to develop effective tools and strategies and contribute to the achievement of the Global Goals. Local governments, thanks to their proximity, are best placed to govern with citizens and to empower all stakeholders to better address inequalities from the local level up. Therefore, a local strategy must be adopted at all levels:

- **Territorial level** – EU development policy must focus on effective democratic governance and strengthening capacities of local and regional governments to unlock their potential as drivers of development (p. 18);
- **National level** – Country or regional strategies need a strong focus on decentralisation and need to establish an enabling framework for local and regional governments to fulfil their responsibilities. Joint

programming must also build on the strengths and added values of all European development actors involved in a country – including European local and regional governments through their international actions (p. 25).

- **Regional/Global level** – The international development agenda is implemented at the territorial level. Local and regional governments must therefore have a seat at the regional/global negotiation tables on development issues. Their participation is crucial in the design and implementation phase of development policies. They must also be involved in the design of indicators at the territorial level and be included in monitoring, evaluation and revision processes (p. 27).

## **Second pillar: a new and more comprehensive approach to policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD)** (pp. 15).

This will allow the EU and its partners to articulate the local perspective at all levels and to effectively address the complexity of each challenge.

PCSD must be understood within its three dimensions: **horizontal coherence** between a set of policies (both internal and external); bottom-up, **vertical coherence** between development stakeholders; and **partnership coherence** (or global partnership) whereby all actors cooperate to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In this regard, the EU must understand the external action of European local and regional governments as a fully-fledged component of the EU development policy. They contribute with their experience, expertise, autonomy and legitimacy to the effective design and implementation of development strategies adapted for each territory's specificity.

**Decentralised cooperation** responds fully to the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals: peer-to-peer cooperation, partnerships between territories, twinning, etc. It puts local and regional governments (LRGs) in the driving seat when it comes to development cooperation and increases the contribution of LRGs to the global goals even more. Thanks to the advanced decentralisation in most EU Member States, European local and regional governments and their associations can provide appropriate support in the fields of local management and planning, local democracy, administrative and decentralisation reforms, transparency and accountability towards citizens, territorial development, regional cohesion, local economic development, and many more. Local or territorial partnerships, therefore, have significant potential to leverage and accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals on the ground.

These are PLATFORMA's contributions to the design of a new European Consensus on Development. This document offers a more elaborated input to the new European Consensus on Development and also provides concrete examples of global challenges (climate change (p. 29), migrations (p. 31), economic development (p. 33), gender inequalities (p. 35)). It is demonstrated how local action and a territorial approach to development can tackle their root causes.



## Addressing inequalities in a complex and interconnected world



**Adopting a local and regional perspective at all levels**

**Policy coherence in the three dimensions**



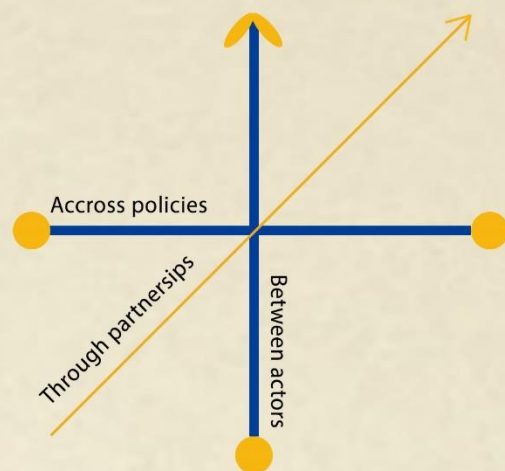
**Territorial level: governance and capacity building**



**National level: decentralisation and enabling environment**



**Regional/global level: a seat at the negotiation table**



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## Policy recommendations

- **The new European Consensus on Development must fully endorse the new international development paradigm:** universal, interconnected and relying on a global and multi-stakeholder Partnership. It should also shift the priority of EU Development Policy towards eradicating inequalities at all levels. (pp. 18-28)
- **Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development must be at the core of EU policies** (internal and external) and must be understood in its three dimensions (across policy sectors, across stakeholders and through international partnerships). (pp. 15-17)
  - It must be an interinstitutional, inter-DG, inter-unit framework and therefore not only be reflected in the future EU Consensus on Development, but also in more general documents such as the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2021-2027.
  - It must include support to local and regional governments in partner countries to monitor and increase PCSD at territorial level – particularly regarding the creation of an enabling investment environment that warrants maximum collective benefits from private investment and job creation.
- **The new European Consensus on Development must systematically include a local perspective at territorial, national and global level** and consequently include a territorial approach to development, recognising that there are many ‘hidden local dimensions’ in development focal sectors. (pp. 18-28)
  - Local and regional governments must be included in the design, implementation monitoring and evaluation phases of all development policies or programmes through multi-level and multi-stakeholder consultation mechanisms and have access to the governing structures of the Association Agreements or compacts with third countries;
  - Support for capacity-building for local governments and their associations in partner countries must go beyond technical management capacities and should also strengthen their ability to co-design national strategies through advocacy and lobbying vis-à-vis national governments.
  - The promotion of decentralisation must regain its status in EU development policy, including in recent initiatives such as the EU Trust Fund for Africa and the new Partnership Framework with third countries. It should enable local and regional governments and their associations to participate in the processes.
- **The EU must facilitate access to development funds and programmes for local and regional governments** by simplifying and aligning the procedures for calls for proposals, calls for tenders or direct grants, to the institutional and legal frameworks that LRGs need to comply with. Particularly support for Europe’s towns and regions’ contribution to global sustainable development (through their international action) needs to be warranted by simplifying processes. (pp. 23-24)
- **The EU must recognise the international action of local and regional governments** as a fully-fledged component of its development policy. (p 27-28)
  - A qualitative and participative assessment by EU Member States of the international action of local and regional governments should be included in the national progress reports on SDGs.
  - Joint programming must build on the added value of all European development actors involved in a partner country, including the involvement of European local and regional governments and their associations through decentralised cooperation.
  - The EU must diversify the sources used to inform development policy decisions, support the use of geographically disaggregated (localised) data in impact assessments, and facilitate

institutionalised national dialogues between central governments of partner countries and their respective LRGs.

- **The dynamic practice of Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) activities by local and regional governments must be supported** through political recognition, labels or awards and accessible grants; as well as initiatives such as Sustainable, Ethical, Green or Fair Trade Cities. (pp. 11-12)
- **The EU must include its core principles of democracy, human rights, good governance** (including subsidiarity) **in its external action** and, as such, assure that the voices of local governments are heard at the global table. (pp. 27-28)
  - The EU must encourage its Member States to include local and regional governments in national delegations to the global development negotiations (such as SDGs monitoring, Habitat III or Development Effectiveness process).
  - The EU must support granting a specific status to LRGs, beyond the current “observer status” in the overall UN system.

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# The context: European development policies in a changing global environment

## Seizing the momentum

The [European Consensus on Development](#) (2006) and the [Agenda for Change](#) (2011), are the two framework documents which have set the objectives and strategic orientation of the EU's development policy for the past decade. The time has come to update them, taking into account the new and complex global reality as reflected in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The European Consensus on Development was designed in response to the Millennium Development Goals that were adopted by the United Nations in 2005. It was the first time that the European community agreed on a single framework and common fundamental principles for EU development cooperation. The statement, jointly issued by the three institutions: European Parliament, Council and Commission, set out key principles including - among others - a number of focal sectors and complementarity of action between the EU and the Member States.

In 2011, the European Commission issued the Communication "Agenda for Change" to update the EU development policy in view of the [Multi-Annual Financial Framework \(MFF\)](#) 2014-2020. It calls for differentiated development partnerships, improved coordination in EU external action, improved coherence among EU policies, and improved concentration with a maximum of 3 focal sectors per region or country.

## A new global agenda for a complex world

In September 2015, the United Nations adopted the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) setting 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and reflecting a real change of paradigm in the traditional approach to development cooperation. These changes must now be reflected in the new European Consensus on Development and in the future Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2021-2027.

The main characteristics of the new global agenda are:

**Interconnectedness:** It is not possible, nor desirable to identify priority goals or challenges in the current context. The overall trend is an increased interconnectedness between the world's territories, between the different actors in society and between global events. Similarly, since the SDGs are all interlinked and even mutually dependant, it is not possible to achieve the 2030 agenda without addressing equally and simultaneously all of the SDGs.

- EU development policy must therefore reorient its fundamental objective from reduction of poverty towards the eradication of all inequalities.

**Universality:** in addition to being indivisible, the 2030 Agenda applies to all stakeholders in all countries, thus ending the traditional North/South approach to development cooperation. It goes beyond inequalities *between* countries.

- This new perspective will enable the EU to address inequalities *within* countries and between territories.

**Global Partnership:** SDG17 emphasises the fundamental principle of a Global Partnership, building on the synergies of all stakeholders, fostering North-South, South-South or triangular cooperation, implementing the

Action Agenda for Financing Development, and strengthening Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD).

### Multi-stakeholder partnerships, a cornerstone of the Agenda 2030

*“17.16 Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries*

*17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships” (United Nations G. A., 2015)*

### **Local and regional governments<sup>1</sup>: key actors for sustainable development**

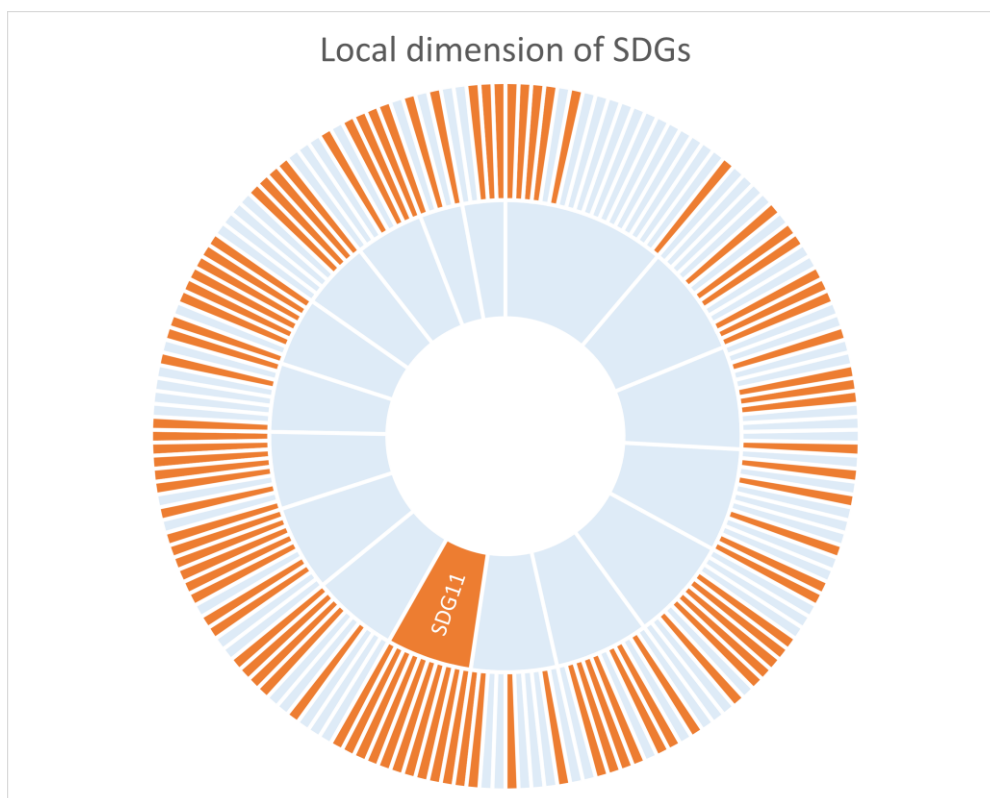
From the perspective of local and regional governments (LRGs), a holistic and coherent approach is natural: a local authority has a plethora of competences which are all interrelated and cannot be prioritised one over the other. Local and regional governments also have a long legacy of international action to mutually reinforce their capacities, dating back to the establishment of the first world organisation of local governments in the city of Ghent (Belgium) in 1913 – well before the creation of the first multinational organisations.

**All of the Sustainable Development Goals include a local dimension** (United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), 2015): they cannot be achieved without policies designed at the local level and led by empowered local governments. More specifically, 65% of the SDG targets cannot be achieved without local action (GIZ, Adelphi, Urban Catalyst, 2015). This is the case particularly for urban food systems (SDG2), water or electricity delivery (SDG6 and 7), waste management (SDG12), urban planning (SDG11) and investment in infrastructures (SDG9), access to education (SDG4), inclusive cities for vulnerable populations (SDG10), and gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls (SDG5).

*“It will be important to consider that many of the investments to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals will take place at the subnational level and be led by local authorities” (United Nations General Assembly, 2014)*

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<sup>1</sup> The European Union terminology refers to “local authorities” but PLATFORMA recommends the systematic use of the wording “local and regional governments” or “local and regional authorities”.



*This graph shows that more than 50% of the SDGs' targets include a local dimension. PLATFORMA, based on (United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), 2015)*

**Decentralised cooperation responds fully to the objectives of the Global Partnership through peer-to-peer cooperation, partnerships between territories, twinning, etc.** It puts local and regional governments (LRGs) in the driving seat of their territories' development. Partnerships between peers at the local and regional level therefore have a significant potential leverage effect and will accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals on the ground.

European development partners (local and regional governments, civil society organisations, private sector, etc.) have relevant experience that can contribute to their counterparts' development in other continents. Thanks to **the advanced decentralisation in most EU Member States**, European local and regional governments and their associations can provide significant support in the fields of local management and planning, local democracy, administrative and decentralisation reforms, transparency and accountability towards citizens, territorial development, regional cohesion, local economic development, etc. Participating in international cooperation can also stimulate governance innovations within European LRGs and as such address the universality of the SDGs.

Furthermore, **local and regional governments are key actors in raising citizens' awareness on global development challenges** and on the importance of local, national and European development policies. Thousands of European Local and regional governments are very active in this field, engaging intensively with civil society actors ([Development Education and Awareness Raising – DEAR](#)).

### Best practice: Food Smart Cities for Development and the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact

Food defines how cities are organised and how citizens live: it is an often neglected but very critical element in creating sustainable cities. The food system has become more and more global in nature and now makes all the worlds' territories interdependent - while local governments often feel ill-equipped to deal with its global nature.

These days, cities all over the world are engaged in food related projects: from school catering over poverty reduction to urban gardening. Whereas urban gardening in European cities was mostly a tool for awareness raising on environmental and climate issues, it is a matter of survival for many urban dwellers in the Global South. European cities are increasingly learning from their peers in the Global South how to include poverty reduction and social cohesion in food strategies. City governments all over the world are discovering that parts of their cities are food deserts: citizens without access to fresh, healthy food within walking distance – a phenomenon long thought to be an exclusive feature of North-American cities.

In response to this growing but uncoordinated focus on food in cities, the City of Milano, Italy, gathered almost 130 cities around the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP). A first-of-its kind acclamation of food being essential to build sustainable cities. The Pact gives leverage to local governments to address issues of food distribution in cities and the importance of fair trading practices that respect workers and supports small and medium enterprises. Both are issues that have origins beyond the city scale (and the city governments' competences) but have very real impacts at city and neighborhood level. It is an example of local governments cooperating to mobilise citizens and local businesses, strengthen their policy capacities at local level and their advocacy towards more central levels of government and private sector.

The MUFPP is unique also because it creates a learning space for cities, regardless of the country or continent they are from. Yearly monitoring meetings are envisaged to monitor impact and further enrich the local approaches with global dimensions.

[www.foodpolicymilano.org](http://www.foodpolicymilano.org)

**Local and regional governments can also play an important role for promoting culture as an instrument of external relations** as Vice-President and High Representative Federica Mogherini highlighted in her address at the European Culture Forum 2016. A growing number of decentralised partnerships go beyond project implementation (for instance through cultural and human exchanges) and build on political relations, historical links, active diasporas communities, etc. All of which fosters deeper relationships and mutual understanding between communities.

*“Local authorities are particularly important: The World Cities Culture Report 2015 shows the excellent return – in terms of growth and poverty reduction – for cities that invest in culture. So cities can be a crucial player in our cultural diplomacy.” (Mogherini, 2016)*

**A number of SDG campaigns and roadmaps have been developed in EU Member States and in some partner countries to ensure that local governments are involved in strategies to achieve the SDGs.** These instruments could also be replicated in partner countries and inspire European local and regional governments alike.

### **Best practice: FEMP, localising the SDGs**

The Federation of Spanish Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP) has urged the Spanish government to create a “multilevel coordination committee” at national level that recognises the 2030 Agenda as part of national policy in order to ensure its effective implementation. Furthermore, the federation has joined with other European associations, such as the Italian association of municipalities, to raise public awareness of the SDGs. The FEMP’s strategy is to raise awareness, make commitments and build alliances around the localisation of the SDGs. This target will be translated into training, compliance instruments, and evaluation and monitoring tools. Within the PLATFORMA network, the Spanish, Italian, Dutch and Latvian associations will pilot this approach with the ambition to offer the methodology to other European and partner countries.

Meanwhile the Brazilian Council of Municipalities (CNM) and the UNDP ART Initiative are partnering to strengthen the role of municipalities in the localisation of SDGs. This joint initiative seeks to raise awareness among local governments of the 2030 Agenda, to enable them to integrate the SDGs into their local plans and to build monitoring and accountability systems at the local level. Activities include: identification of relevant indicators for municipalities; the drawing up of guidelines and publications on the role of local governments in the new development framework and capacity building of new elected mayors in the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs.

## **Local and regional governments: increasingly recognised in EU development policies**

In the past, the EU has repeatedly recognised local and regional governments as key political actors to achieve sustainable development, notably since the adoption of the EU Communication [“Empowering Local Authorities in Partner Countries for Enhanced Governance and More Effective Development Outcomes”](#), and the [Council conclusions](#) of July 2013.

*“Civil society and local authorities. Building on the ‘Structured Dialogue’, the EU should strengthen its links with civil society organisations, social partners and local authorities, through regular dialogue and use of best practices. It should support the emergence of an organised local civil society able to act as a watchdog and partner in dialogue with national governments. The EU should consider ways of mobilising local authorities’ expertise, e.g. through networks of excellence or twinning exercises.”* (European Commission, Increasing the Impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change, 2011)

The European Parliament also issued three reports supporting the role of local and regional governments in development: a first report on [local authorities and development cooperation](#) was presented by French MEP Pierre Schapira in 2007; followed by Romanian MEP Corina Crețu’s report on [local authorities and civil society: Europe’s engagement in support of sustainable development](#) in 2013; and a third report last year (2015) by Cypriot MEP Eleni Theodorou on [the role of local authorities in developing countries in development cooperation](#).

*“16. The EU acknowledges the essential oversight role of democratically elected citizens' representatives. Therefore, it encourages an increased involvement of national assemblies, parliaments and local authorities.” (European Parliament, Council, & Commission, The European Consensus on Development, 2006)*

In these documents, the EU highlights a number of challenges that should be addressed to unlock the development potential of local and regional governments, namely:

- **The promotion of an enabling environment** (clear legal and institutional framework) for local authorities which includes clear devolution of competences, human and financial resources
- **The strengthening of local authorities' capacities in the field of democratic governance** (promoting transparency and participatory governance), technical capacities in public services delivery and infrastructure management, political leadership, and strategic planning
- **The strengthening of associations of local and regional governments at the local, regional and global level**, for their potential to advocate and provide technical and political inputs in decision-making fora, and to boost the capacities of their members through the promotion of best practices, exchanges of experience and technical support

In addition, the European Union has engaged more strategically with local and regional governments, most notably through their associations, at national, regional and global level. Framework Partnership Agreements have been signed between DG DEVCO and five networks (PLATFORMA, UCLG, CLGF, AIMF and UCLG-Africa) in January 2015 - promoting shared values and a commitment to pursuing shared objectives.

It is now time to structurally embed these political declarations in the EU consensus on development and to launch operational strategies that support local governments directly. To do so, the new EU development policy must pursue a new approach to Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development and adopt a local and regional perspective at all levels: territorial, national, regional and global.

# PLATFORMA's recommendations for the new EU Consensus on Development

## A/ Pursue a new approach to Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development

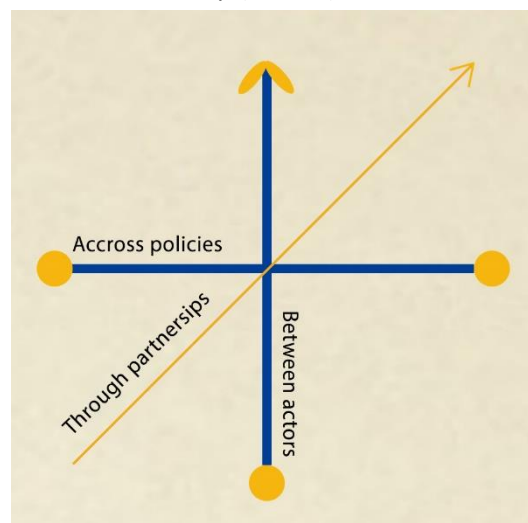
As the new global reality is intrinsically complex and interconnected, it is **neither possible nor desirable to assume that one isolated policy can tackle one isolated challenge**. All EU policies must be monitored on their development impact (the classic definition of Policy Coherence for Development). Additionally, development policies must be increasingly coherent across the stakeholders it involves and recognise international partnerships as cornerstones for reaching the global goals.

Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) is enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), and Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development is the target 17.14 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>2</sup>. But PCSD is usually understood as a principle applied within the set of external policies (trade and investment policy in particular). The European Union must add the "Sustainable" dimension to PC(S)D and address policy coherence throughout all European policies, internal and external alike, including coherence across stakeholders, and recognise (international) partnerships as an integral part of coherence.

*"The Union shall take account of the objectives of development cooperation in the policies that it implements which are likely to affect developing countries."*  
(European Union, 2012)

European LRGs – as both policy makers and implementing stakeholders – are already quite advanced on the domestic aspect of PCSD and in aligning their internal policies with international action. Many initiatives are taken at the local and regional level to make the local-global continuum visible, including those on fair trade, sustainable cities, and the local agenda 21. In addition, **LRGs who adopted an international cooperation policy are also more likely to engage their citizens in Global Citizenship Education** (or Development Education and Awareness Raising) **projects** to raise their citizens' awareness on global public goods and challenges. Leading by example, European local and regional governments can play a critical role in transforming the way we produce and consume.

Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development must be articulated in three dimensions, which are intrinsically linked with the principles of the Global Partnership (SDG17):



<sup>2</sup> In this document we use the terminology of the United Nations to better encompass all the dimensions of Sustainable Development.

- **Horizontal:** This is the traditional conception of PCSD: coherence within development objectives and actions taken by one actor (e.g. the development policy of the European Union, or one of its Member States, the international action of one local or regional government). However, the traditional conception in Europe fails to address PCSD within internal policies, which also have a significant impact on global challenges and trends. Food policy, procurement, consumption and recycling, transport, agriculture, energy, fisheries, education, etc. all have impacts on greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, imports/exports, which in turn, impact global sustainable development (European Commission DG ENVI, 2013). For instance, the Europe 2020 strategy does not address the international impacts of the flagship initiatives, nor does it comprehensively address the whole set of SDGs (Niestroy, 2016).

*“So far, PCD only covers part of the SDGs, is part of a rather siloed approach, and is not well-connected to the domestic dimension of sustainable development. [...] The core of a PCSD approach should continue with the PCD focus on the domestic-external track, but through the lens of sustainable development (SD) on both the domestic and external side.” (Niestroy, 2016)*

**The new European Consensus on Development must intensify the horizontal screening** – particularly monitoring the effects of increased involvement of private sector on aspects beyond economic growth and job creation (i.e. decent work, environmental impacts, transparent engagement with governments...) But PCSD must be addressed not solely throughout development and external policy, but also throughout EU internal policies. In this regard, the new European Consensus on Development must be an interinstitutional / inter-DG / inter-committee/ inter-unit framework. One way of linking internal and external aspects of sustainable development can be an increased cooperation between DG DEVCO and other DGs, DG REGIO in particular. For instance, it would be interesting to strengthen the transversal international dimension in the Partnerships of the EU Urban Agenda (pact of Amsterdam) by involving local and regional governments who shared their innovative urban policies in the framework of their international cooperation.

- **Vertical:** PCSD also demands improved coordination between development actors and stakeholders, which is in line with the 2030 Agenda whereby the United Nations, the European Union, Member States, and other stakeholders such as local and regional governments, civil society organisations, private sector, etc. commit to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In this process of coordination and coherence between development stakeholders, **a bottom-up approach** must be adopted in order to truly answer the need of populations. Local and regional governments and their representative associations are, in this regard, key partners to help countries (and other European and international development partners) define development priorities and strategies that respond to local needs. For example, developing decentralisation processes without involving local governments in practice is hollow and ineffective.

In this regard, **joint programming could be a particularly relevant instrument to build on the added value of each of the European stakeholders involved in partner countries.** For instance, the European Union Delegations could include representatives of European local and regional governments, involved in decentralised cooperation, in the country to better assess the challenges at the territorial level. Development strategy must build on the added value of each European stakeholder.

*“Cooperation between Member States development actors should also be encouraged in the framework of joint implementation.” (Council of the European Union, Stepping up Joint Programming - council conclusions (12 May), 2016)*

- **Partnerships and international cooperation:** The third dimension of PCSD is fundamentally linked with the Global Partnership and the overall consistency necessary for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It is about developing partnerships between development stakeholders at all levels – for instance decentralised cooperation, or partnerships between associations of local and regional governments – to exchange on good practices, experiences and lessons learned. For instance, it is advisable



that, in line with the new Global Covenant of Mayors for climate and energy, the international dimension of the New European Covenant of Mayors 2030 be strengthened through the promotion of climate-related decentralised cooperation between cities globally.

Finally, the new European Consensus on Development must refer to and mainstream the principles enshrined in the European Charter of Local Self-Government with the objective of empowering people through their participation in the conduct of public affairs from the local level (Council of Europe, 1985). In particular, **local governments can play a key role for more inclusive societies**, by granting access to public services, spaces, and policy-making mechanisms to vulnerable populations (women, elderly, migrant communities, etc.). EU actions should always be coherent with the basic principles and values of the European Union, including subsidiarity, local democracy and local self-governance.

### ***Policy recommendations:***

- Put PCSD at the core of EU policies (internal and external).
  - It must include intensified monitoring of horizontal coherence (i.e. impacts of increased engagement of private sector beyond growth and jobs), including internal policies (i.e. procurement of goods sourced outside EU)
  - It must include coherence across stakeholders engaged in sustainable development (i.e. Joint programming must build on the added value of all European development actors involved in a partner country, including European local and regional governments and their associations involved through decentralised cooperation)
  - It must recognise the key contribution of international partnerships in achieving the global goals (i.e. decentralisation strategies that do not structurally include local governments are bound to be incomplete, and to fail).
- **Reflect PCSD not only in the future EU Consensus on Development**, but also in a more general decision such as the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2021-2027. It must be an interinstitutional, inter-DG, inter-unit framework.
- **Systematically address the impacts on territories and local communities** – through geographically disaggregated (local) data – in impact assessments and evaluation of EU external policies.
- **Provide support through political recognition, labels or awards** and facilitate the practice of development education and awareness raising activities by local and regional governments through accessible grants; as well as initiatives such as Sustainable, Ethical, Green or Fair Trade Cities.
- **Guarantee coherence of EU external action** with the basic principles and values of the European Union, including subsidiarity. Mainstream the principles enshrined in the European Charter of Local Self-Government with the objective of empowering people through their participation in the conduct of public affairs from the local level.

## **B/ Adopt a local perspective at all levels**

The impacts of global challenges the EU development policies aim to address will be felt at the local level. PLATFORMA therefore calls for an increased role for local and regional governments in the implementation of the EU Development policies. In order to strengthen LRGs capacities as ever more meaningful agents of local development, a set of measures and support are needed, including direct access to development funds and programmes, and the possibility to participate in the design and monitoring of regional and global strategies.

**Adopting a local perspective at all level includes direct engagement with local and regional governments, but must also look beyond to the national and global levels.** There are many hidden local dimensions to development. The failure to capture this will make the EU development policies less effective. Local and regional governments are ready to contribute to these processes at territorial, national and global level.



### **Territorial level: Strong local democratic governance capacities to address complex challenges**

In a fast-changing environment and highly complex world, **all governmental bodies and particularly local and regional governments need to build effective democratic governance capacities** in order to be able to respond to the multiple challenges and to truly and effectively benefit from EU development programmes.

In line with PLATFORMA's call to drastically increase Policy Coherence for Development in all three dimensions, attention to the local perspective at territorial level should not be isolated in few specific units of the 'EU Aid Architecture' but rather be transversal. In particular, the Delegations of the European Union in partner countries should be instructed and assisted to add this perspective of working with local and regional governments to their practice. Many focal sectors in the National Indicative Programmes include a "hidden local dimension", including social sectors (health, education, water and sanitation); rural development, agriculture and food security; productive investment, private sector development and employment creation; energy; governance, justice sector reform and the rule of law (Bilbao, 2016).

### **Strengthen technical and democratic governance capacities**

Since the effects of global challenges are mostly felt at the local level, **strengthening the capacities of local and regional governments to respond to these complex realities must receive priority attention** in the new European Consensus on Development. Local and regional governments (LRGs), be it in Europe or in partner countries, are legitimate and relevant actors for local development and for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at territorial level.

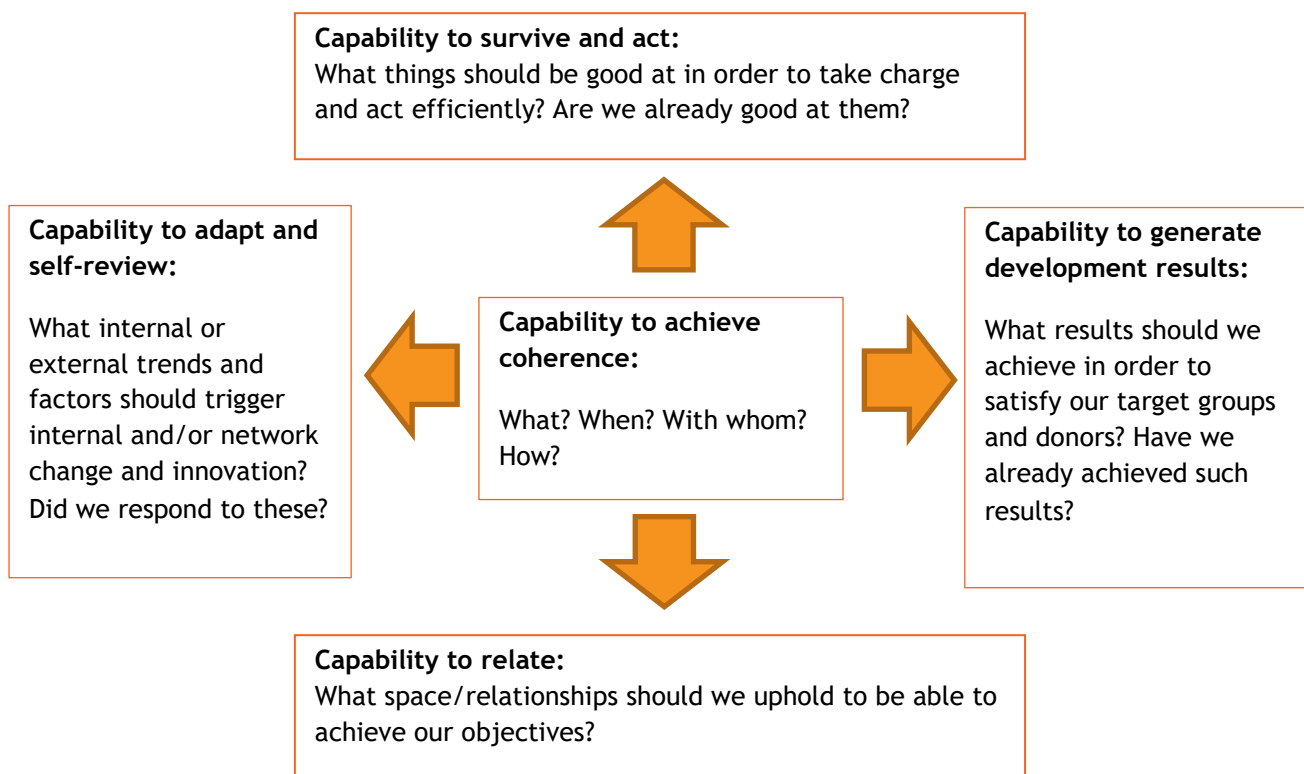
**Empowering local governments requires investments in individual and institutional capacities at ground level.** This will enable them to defend common interests, public goods, and to work towards the eradication of inequalities within their territories.

Democratic governance is understood as the exercise of legitimate authority (in concertation with multiple stakeholders) to decide on common priorities and goals, to act accordingly and to account for the results.

(Local) governments are a pivotal actor that drive governance processes and, ideally, enable multiple stakeholders to engage in the process.

**Local and regional governments need strong governance capacities in order to effectively and efficiently manage their territories**, to be able to engage, deliver, interact, reflect, self-renew, and bring about institutional innovation. It is well-documented (BORN, 2006) that inequalities are often more tangible at local level. Localising by itself will therefore not be the solution: only empowered local governments will overcome local inequalities and deliver services to all equally.

*A balanced approach to monitoring and evaluating capacity: assessing change in five core capabilities that affect capacity and performance*



*(Capacity4dev.eu, 2014)*

When a local or regional government ensures public services delivery for its local communities – which is the primary mandate of LRGs – citizens gain a new interest and desire to be involved in local governance. Do this in an effective and efficient manner, capabilities of the local institutions need to go beyond technical service delivery but include other governance capabilities. **Strengthening local democratic governance is therefore a solid first step towards democratic governance at national level**, and a fertile ground for the rule of law to put down roots in the country.

## Best practice: VVSG capacity building in partner country

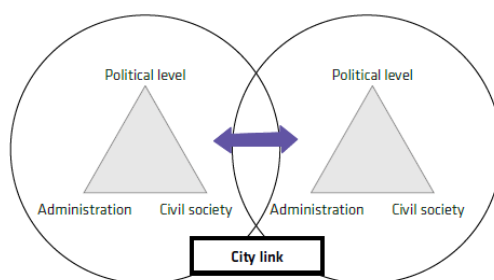
Flemish local governments have been committed to international solidarity and international cooperation for more than 20 years. Since 2011 a shared vision, co-created with their international partners, focusses the efforts on capacity building at the local level.

Municipal international cooperation makes a unique contribution to the development landscape. Local governments are most familiar with the implementation of a local policy. Nobody else can support local authorities as well as... local authorities themselves. That is the niche that local authorities have found within the wide range of actors in international cooperation. It is also the main motivation of many local authorities to position themselves as actors in a policy domain like international or development cooperation that may not immediately be part of the local authority's key responsibilities.

Capacity development are ways to support local authorities to reinforce their administrative power. It must remain a constant concern that this strengthened capacity is not limited to an individual learning process, but is also institutionally transferred to good, improved or even simply different practices.

A unique way to put capacity building into practice for municipal international cooperation is the colleague-to-colleague approach. In this peer-to-peer method, fellow-officials exchange experiences and knowledge within their area of expertise, a specific policy item or the organisational structure. This dialogue is enriching to both parties and strengthen the support base considerably both in Flanders and in the South. The support of politicians is essential in order to make institutional changes.

The Flemish approach always aims at involving the local governments political and administrative level but also the civil society from each of the partners. To ensure a maximum, long-term impact, every angle of the triangle needs its own agents of change, its own key figures: people who (can) steer the decision making. As such the international action itself is an exercise of good governance by coordinating all relevant actors in the territory towards a common understanding and action.



## **Strengthen capabilities to engage and interact in multi-level governance**

Effective capacities can only be brought to life in a conducive administrative context. **Local governments and their associations in the Global South are rarely involved in decision-making processes on issues directly affecting their competences**, for example in the design of national urban policies to the implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases. Formal multi-level governance structures would facilitate this involvement when developing, implementing and evaluating policies that will have an impact on local governments' daily work. The capacity to achieve sustainable local development and properly address its challenges depends on the quality of the dialogue and interaction between tiers of government (see also pp. 25-26).

However, in many countries, LRGs are not yet fully equipped to take on these responsibilities. In those cases, local governments are not able to effectively fulfil their democratic mandate or their role in local service delivery. As a result, they are sometimes perceived to be part of the problem rather than the solution. **Investing in local governments' capacities** (not at least their capacities to interact with citizens and territorial stakeholders) **will enable them to tackle existing inequalities from the territorial level** and to fulfil their responsibilities according to their competences.

In order to enhance local and regional governments' role as development and governance agents, **the EU must foster multi-stakeholder partnerships and multi-level governance**. Governments at all levels must engage with all actors in their territory (private sector, civil society, academia, etc.) and coordinate with other tiers of the State. Not all relevant stakeholders have the capacity to engage with other sectors or other tiers of the State – let alone with EU institutions. To achieve multi-actor and multi-level governance, the EU should invest in building capacities where they are not yet present.

International cooperation between local governments has proven to be very effective and efficient in building democratic governance capacities at territorial level. The context of local government is quite particular. Even if the context varies significantly between countries, the proximity of citizens, elected officials and public administration is a characteristic shared by all local governments. Learning amongst peers to tackle challenges within such a particular context facilitates learning and is therefore more cost and time effective than many other approaches. Therefore, international action of European local governments must be recognised as a particularly important contribution to the effective design of programmes for territorial capacity building in partner countries.

## **Best practice: Coordination of local governments' international actions in Ukraine, a learning platform for action**

After the start of the political crises in Ukraine several international actors developed support mechanisms to support democracy and good governance in the country, often also including a local government perspective. PLATFORMA – the European voice of local and regional governments for development identified the need to coordinate these actions between the different representative associations of local governments in Ukraine and the different international actors engaging with local governments.

December 2015 brought a two-day coordination seminar in which 20 international (mostly European + Canada and USA) partners of Ukrainian local governments met and dialogued in a coordinated manner with their 4 Ukrainian partner organisations.

The participants stressed the importance of coordination of a multitude of actors of decentralised cooperation. There is a clear role for associations and networks in the process of coordination and exchange of information, not only at the national level (local governments associations) but also at the macro-regional level (Eastern Neighbourhood, Visegrád Group, Western Balkans). Coordination by local government associations and networks notably creates local ownership of the activities and results.

Many participants underlined the need for financial instruments suitable for city-to-city cooperation to be put in place, as most current instruments favour large-scale programmes and projects and are not easily accessible for individual local governments. Large-scale programmes and projects should also include components related to decentralisation and local governance as well as capacity-building in local government associations, which play an indispensable role in the collection and dissemination of information and in coordination of individual municipal projects. In this context, several participants reiterated the positive experience and impact of a structured transfer of know-how resulting from the LOGON project which between 1998–2005 established a network of local government associations throughout Europe to exchange experiences related to European Union accession as well as information on tasks, objectives and activities of local and regional government associations in the EU Member States.

A similar exercise to coordinate international actors and national associations of local governments is programmed to be held in Georgia late 2016.

## Access to development funds and programmes

Despite the number of funds devoted to sustainable development, these are generally closed (either ‘de jure’ or ‘de facto’) to LRGs’ direct access. Beyond the thematic program for Local Authorities in Development, direct support for local governments’ in partner countries to effectively govern their territories will allow them to best respond to the many challenges they face. They are often structurally underfunded or overburdened with responsibilities and face limits on governance effectiveness; sometimes because of national legislation, sometimes because of economic challenges.

Donors, including the EU, continue to channel their contributions mainly through national governments, large international consultancies or international NGOs. These actors, however, do not always have a good understanding of local dynamics and often fail to coordinate adequately with local actors, including local authorities. This **lack of coordination can substantially weaken local governance structures and negatively impact the sustainability of the action**, thus decreasing its effectiveness. The type of implementation partner is never fully neutral and the EU must consider the democratic legitimacy of local governments as one of their unique characteristics in the landscape of international cooperation.

The EU has acknowledged local and regional governments as development actors, particularly with the dedicated thematic programme “Civil Society Organisation – Local Authorities” (CSO-LA). However, there is still room for improvement in the design of the projects and guidelines in other thematic and regional lines in order to maximise accessibility for local and regional governments and their associations.

The participation of smaller municipalities in European grants and tenders should be encouraged by, for instance, adapting the modalities and timelines of calls for proposals to the institutional and legal framework LRGs need to comply with. Local and regional governments are often bound by strict national laws on finances, approval, transparency and local and regional councils often need a few months to approve expenditures. The use of sub-granting should also be increased to foster the diversity of applicants. The support of European peers can be useful to assist small, sometimes under-resourced, local and regional governments in the implementation of EU funded projects in partner countries.

### ***Connect the local perspective at national and local level: implement a territorial approach to local development***

*The Territorial Approach to Local Development (TALD), as elaborated by the unit CSO-LA of DG DEVCO aims at empowering people through the democratic participation of territorial stakeholders in their own local governments. It also has the valuable ambition to eradicate the artificial administrative silo’s that limit direct support to local governments in other than the dedicated thematic budget.*

*It is a good jump-off point for the new European Consensus on Development to prioritise support to local democracy, local governance capacities, the creation of an enabling environment at national level and the insertion of the local governments’ voice in regional and global decision-making.*

*As a matter of fact, TALD, as a methodology which capitalises on the potential of a territory by bringing different actors together, is very similar to the approach adopted in decentralised cooperation (i.e. involving a variety of territorial stakeholders and fostering links between various components of the society: civil society organisations, local businesses, universities, students, professional, etc) albeit on a different scale and more top-down than the inherently bottom-up characteristic of decentralised cooperation.*

*The relevant contributions from European local and regional governments (LRGs) and their associations to strengthen their counterparts abroad and the processes of decentralisation in partner countries should be made more explicit in the new Consensus on Development and in the TALD strategy. The European Union should pride itself in the level of commitment from its local and regional governments and facilitate their contribution to the global agenda. This would allow for support between peers in EU and partner countries for institutional innovation, capacity building, exchange of best practices on territorial policies, engagement with civil society, management of EU funds, support for decentralisation processes, strengthening service delivery, etc.*

*Including decentralised cooperation as a means of implementation will also be helpful in raising awareness of the EU Delegations on the potential of EU and partner country local and regional governments in partnerships to implement development programmes. [A survey conducted by PLATFORMA](#) during summer 2015 of all the EU Delegations working in developing countries showed that most of them solely identify the CSO-LA thematic programme as a relevant instrument to work with local and regional governments. This comes despite the fact that, many other sectors of development cooperation include a “hidden local dimension” (Bilbao, 2016).*

### **Policy recommendations:**

- **Support capacity-building for local governments and their associations in partner countries** to strengthen their ability to deliver on the ground and to co-design national strategies through advocacy and lobbying vis-à-vis central governments.
- **Tailor program management** (including application phases) to guarantee ‘de jure’ and ‘de facto’ access to funds for local and regional governments.
- **Include decentralised cooperation between European local and regional governments** and their counterparts outside the EU as a means of implementation and tailor support measures to be effective and accessible.
- **Foster subsidiarity as well as concrete multi-level and multi-stakeholder participation** when designing national development priorities. Include local and regional governments and their associations in the effort, from the design phase.
- **The methods of the EU development programmes must be adapted** to the realities and constraints inherent in local governance and local democracy in order to truly reach and empower local and regional governments.





## National level: Creating an enabling environment for local governments

*“87. With a view to improved legitimacy and accountability of country-driven reforms, the Community will promote a high level of political commitment to these reforms. It will, as part of this, also support decentralisation and local authorities.” (European Parliament, Council, & Commission, The European Consensus on Development, 2006)*

Integrating a local perspective across all tiers of government requires both the commitment of the national governments and investment in capacities to do so. **Successful interaction requires partners within all tiers of government** to have similar capacities and a shared understanding of the goals and challenges they face.

The call to national states to create enabling environments in which local governments can act and facilitate participation of multiple local stakeholders is not new. It already featured in the Habitat II agenda (1996, paragraph 45) but was not commonly taken up by national governments.

In this regard, the EU must entice its development partners to create national conditions that enable local government action, and particularly, support the territorial and administrative reforms that provide LRGs with competences, capacities, and the necessary means to carry out their mandate.

### **Enabling interaction across tiers of government**

An ‘enabling environment’ refers to a set of national policies that permit local and regional governments to fully comply with their mandate as development agents and policy-makers at the territorial level, through effective administrative, political and financial devolution, and the provision of sufficient capacities in terms of financial, technical and human means.

Fostering an enabling environment for LRGs and CSOs is a recurrent theme addressed by the [Policy Forum on Development](#), a platform where the stakeholders in EU development policies meet. **European development policy should aim at empowering local and regional governments to become pivotal players in their territories’ development**, and as such, to effectively contribute to the design, implementation and monitoring of national development strategies (Global Taskforce of local and regional governments, Roadmap for localising the SDGs: implementation and monitoring at subnational level, 2016). The EU should therefore monitor and positively influence the creation of enabling environments for LRGs in partner countries. Fostering dialogue at national level with local government associations and facilitating peer exchanges of good practices between associations in different countries of the region and from the EU is a very effective means to this end.

Enabling environments build on an administrative framework, but mostly on multi-stakeholder interaction and dialogues. In this respect, **the EU must foster multi-level and multi-stakeholder partnerships and consultation mechanisms** when designing priorities and strategies in partner countries, including for the monitoring and evaluation of EU policies and programmes.

### **Enabling qualitative decentralisation**

**Local and regional governments must be empowered to lead and take responsibility for the well-being and sustainability of their territory.** There is strong evidence of the benefits of decentralisation on territorial development. According to a survey carried out by UNDP in 2012, progress towards the Millennium Development Goals was more likely when national governments collaborated with sub-national authorities

(DeLoG, 2013), in accordance with the subsidiarity principle. The first conclusions from 5 country reports on the SDG process commissioned by the Policy Forum on Development suggest the same relation.

Fiscal decentralisation, ensuring LRGs' access to their own revenues, accompanied by improved capacities in local tax collection, is also crucial in mobilising additional resources at the local level to be re-invested in the eradication of inequalities and local sustainable development. This could be done through diversified taxation and added-value capture mechanisms. Through peer-to-peer learning, European LRGs' substantial experience in managing their own resources can support local governments in partner countries dealing with the newly-created revenues.

Moreover, the EU should work together with national governments in partner countries to facilitate the access of local governments to private finance via bonds, loans and put them in the driving seat to orientate instruments such as public-private partnerships or blending finance to be in line with local priorities. As proposed by the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments, **it would be desirable for national governments and international donors to devote a minimum of 20% of their resources to local governments** (Global Taskforce of local and regional governments, Global Taskforce recommendations on the zero draft of the New Urban Agenda, 2016).

Despite its importance for development, decentralisation has largely disappeared from EU's recent initiatives in the field of external action. Although the communication on the EU Trust Fund for Africa states that one of the Fund's objectives is to improve governance to prevent conflict, no reference is made to decentralisation. No mention is made in the Communication launching the new Partnership Framework with third countries either. These omissions are worrying as they might denote a shift away from what used to be a pillar of EU external action.

Finally, given that three-quarters of the world's poor live in middle income countries (Sumner, 2012), **EU development policy cannot be limited only to the countries considered as Low Income Countries by the World Bank**. The principle of differentiation between countries must therefore be abandoned to the benefit of differentiation between territories. The local and regional levels are most often the appropriate level of governance to implement development policies with concrete and visible results for citizens.

### *Policy recommendations:*

- **Monitor and foster the creation of national enabling environments** for local and regional governments and their associations.
- **Foster multi-level and multi-stakeholder consultation mechanisms** when designing priorities and strategies in partner countries, including for the monitoring and evaluation of EU policies and programmes.
- **Support the creation of multi-stakeholder partnerships**. National policy frames for development strategies should be designed to include local governments through their representative platforms. Including local and regional governments in EU joint programming practice can be a first step.
- **Support the development of local capacities** to engage with private sector to guarantee maximum collective benefit from growth and job creation.
- **Bring the promotion of decentralisation back into EU development policy**, including through recent initiatives such as the EU Trust Fund for Africa and the new Partnership Framework with third countries.
- **Dedicate 20% of international development assistance to support decentralisation processes** and capacity building of local and regional governments and their associations.



## Regional/global level: local governments at the negotiating table

2015 and 2016 have been heavy with international negotiations. These included the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on climate change and, more recently, the World Humanitarian Summit and the Habitat III process.

The representation of Local and Regional Governments in the above-mentioned meetings has been stronger than ever before. In December 2015, in Paris, 700 mayors, governors and other local leaders from all continents gathering for the Climate Summit for Local Leaders committed to *“Advance and exceed the expected goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement to be reached at COP 21 to the full extent of [their] authorities”* (Climate Summit for Local Leaders, 2015), thus becoming a driving force of the Global Climate Change Action Agenda (former Lima-Paris Action Agenda – LPAA). **Within the Habitat III process, a unique informal consultation of local and regional leaders was organised in New York in May to exchange views with State representatives.**

Local and regional governments are at the heart of the Paris Agreement and the new Urban Agenda. They will deliver these agendas on the ground in partnership with the other levels of government and civil society. They will also be perceived by their citizens as the main level of government responsible and consequently be held accountable. As policy-makers in their own right, LRGs contribute much to the objectives captured in the global agreements but can only do so effectively when a proper ‘localisation process’ happens (i.e. the local dimension should be taken into account from the start of talks to the design of strategies, indicators and monitoring processes).

**Local governments should be at the negotiating table and not merely be invited to implement agreements made in their absence.** Efforts to localise international commitments are under way. For instance, when it comes to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Global Task Force for Local and Regional Governments and UNDP developed a toolkit and a roadmap to help Local Governments implement the SDGs (Global Taskforce of local and regional governments, Roadmap for localising the SDGs: implementation and monitoring at subnational level, 2016).

**However, increased presence of LRGs on the scene of negotiations does not guarantee that their voice will be heard and taken into consideration.** This stems from a lack of sufficient access to the European and international negotiation systems. LRGs have, at best, an observer status. It prevents them from fulfilling their role as serious interlocutors. Given the complexity of today’s interconnected world, the EU should further strengthen its multi-stakeholder partnerships. This starts by recognising the relevance of each partner and empowering them to cooperate and deliver. Local and regional governments must be directly involved through their national or regional associations in the design of policies, in programming, implementation and monitoring of the policies and development agendas that have a direct impact on them. It is paradoxical that local and regional governments who will be in charge of implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in the end had to open the doors of the negotiation process themselves.

*“What is the point of assessing the national average time distance to public transport, access to water and sanitation or public spaces? These kinds of targets can only be meaningfully measured at the scale of territories.” (Satterthwaite, Where are the local indicators for the SDGs ?, 2016)*

### Best practice: Roadmap for localising the SDGs

All 17 SDGs have targets involving LRG's actions and responsibilities. With this fact in mind the Global Taskforce for Local and Regional Governments, UNDP and UN-Habitat have published a Roadmap aimed at helping LRGs and their association implement and monitor the SDGs

#### What can LRGs do for the SDGs?

- **Awareness-raising:** Include the SDGs in their own policy frameworks, carry out awareness-raising and communication campaigns, nominate local and regional champions.
- **Advocacy:** Participate in the definition of national SDG strategies, call for an enabling environment at national level based on decentralisation and good governance, promote multi-level and multi-stakeholder partnerships.
- **Implementation:** Conduct a needs assessment to define priorities and localise the SDGs, engage in cooperative governance to establish shared priorities, align local and regional plans with the SDGs, mobilize local resources.
- **Monitoring:** Collect, monitor and analyse data at subnational level, develop a set of localised indicators, specific to their territory, participate in the monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs at national level.

#### Policy recommendations:

- **Encourage EU Member States to include representatives of local and regional governments within their national delegations to international negotiations** dealing with topics that have strong local and regional impacts.
- **Support granting a specific status to LRGs**, beyond the current “observer status”, at the UN Habitat Governing Council and **in the overall UN system**.
- **Design implementation and monitoring frameworks for international agreements** jointly with LRGs in order to make sure these are translated into concrete actions on the ground.
- **Better assess at EU Member States level the international action of local and regional governments in their country** (both financial and technical support to peers in partner countries), to be included in the national progress reports on SDGs.

# Addressing global challenges from the local perspective

## 3 exemplary challenges

### Climate change: local actions for global change



Climate change (which can also be considered as one of the root causes of conflicts and migrations) is a global challenge with a very strong local dimension: 75% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are estimated to originate from cities (UNFCCC, 2014). With more than 50% of the global population expected to live in urban areas by 2050 and approximately 80% of the developing world's population living in cities by 2030, local and regional governments are on the front line to design territorial strategies that include four dimensions: **resilience, sustainability, adaptation and mitigation** – thus achieving the objectives of both the Paris Agreement and SDG11. At the same time, territories in the developing world are also the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change and less equipped to handle this challenge. For instance, in the next 10 years, the global waste production will dramatically increase – up to 2.2 billion of tons – consequently, the cost of waste management in developing countries will be multiplied by 5 (France Diplomatie, 2016).

*"28.5. Representatives of associations of local authorities are encouraged to establish processes to increase the exchange of information, experience and mutual technical assistance among local authorities." (United Nations, 1992)*

All local and regional governments in the world are confronted, though with different levels of preparedness and intensity, with climate change and its effects (e.g. coastal erosion, soil salinisation, drought and increased forest fires, floods, etc.), and are on the frontline to design sustainable and resilient cities. They need to do so while also tackling many other local and global challenges. Only empowered government institutions can assure that short-term objectives (such as job creation or infrastructure) respect the long term goal of environmental sustainability.

In this regard, **decentralised cooperation and exchanges of best practices can be particularly helpful** for local and regional governments in partner countries **to acquire the necessary expertise and resilience** to handle these increasing challenges; for instance, through technical or methodological assistance in the elaboration of integrated territorial plans for climate (ITPC) or for the implementation [of local agenda21](#) (Carlier & Fournis, 2012).

## Best practice: Paris-Johannesburg for the elaboration of a climate plan

The City of Johannesburg has been conducting a number of actions to fight against climate changes for some years in order to ensure a sustainable urban development that is environmentally friendly. Starting in 1993, Johannesburg engaged in the programme “Cities for climate protection”, setting a basic methodology to reference greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. In 2010, the Municipality of Johannesburg elaborated a draft strategy to reduce GHG emissions without compromising the growth and development of the metropolis (objectives: -10% by 2015, -43% by 2050). Today, several isolated actions are undertaken but the municipality experiences difficulties in elaborating a relevant comprehensive strategy.

Johannesburg municipality then sought the support of Paris for the elaboration of its climate plan. This cooperation also participates in Johannesburg’s “spatial transformation” policy that also benefits from a partnership with the French Development Agency (AFD)

Paris expertise should therefore help the economic capital city of South-Africa to develop its climate plan – Paris developed its own first climate plan in 2007 -, especially on supporting the mapping of isolated actions and the identification of the different stakeholders.

In the framework of this new cooperation – that associates the C40 and is financed by the AFD – Paris will contribute by sharing its expertise.

### The cooperation project includes:

- Introduction to Paris’ climate plan, adaptation plan and the methodology of elaboration
- Study trips to Paris and to Johannesburg to exchange on implementation good practices
- Review of technical documents

## Security, migration and development: global impacts on local societies

Large movements of people into local communities has a disruptive effect. Considering that 60% of the world's refugees and 80% of internally displaced people are located in urban areas (UNHCR, 2016), **interaction with and support for local governments is essential for the success of external assistance when dealing with emergency situations.**

LRGs can also facilitate the long term integration of migrants by providing them with information on the local labour market and facilitating the matching of skills with the demand from local employers. They are **key in reducing the vulnerability of crisis-affected populations and promoting their self-reliance** by improving the delivery of services such as education and health, upgrading slums and deprived urban areas and designing participatory and integrated urban strategies.

Cities in particular provide opportunities but also pose challenges for equality and security. Competition for control over cities and their resources requires institutional mechanisms for political decision-making and secure social inclusion. However, the compact size of cities offers great potential to develop inclusive institutions and manage political and social conflict if city governments are empowered to install participatory governance systems.

**In order to effectively address the root causes of conflict and fragility, LRGs should be given a central role.** Problems such as land grabbing and the fight for resources between communities must be addressed at the local level. Local governments can facilitate peaceful dialogues between communities, thus reducing in-country or cross-border conflicts. They also play an important role in state-building from the grassroots level, thereby contributing to stability. In some cases, a local approach to peace-building - through mediation between different communities, enhancement of the role of local governments in community building and reconciliation, community policing, etc. - can prove to be the most efficient and effective solution.

In addition, **territorial partnerships in Europe have had a positive impact on regional integration and have lowered the communication barriers between countries at the community/local level.** This approach should therefore be privileged in EU policies in conflict affected countries and communities. Local and regional governments are relevant actors in maintaining local democracy and good governance, even in a national context where human rights, democracy and good governance are not necessarily respected. In this regard, it is crucial that development or humanitarian policy in fragile, crisis or conflict-affected countries include LRGs as legitimate development actors. Territorial partnerships also ensure greater sustainability for humanitarian or development projects; contrary to some international NGOs, local and regional governments are there to stay.

*“Should a country loosen its commitment to human rights and democracy, the EU should strengthen its cooperation with non-state actors and local authorities and use forms of aid that provide the poor with the support they need.” (European Commission, Increasing the Impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change, 2011)*

EU proposals to deal with the short-term crisis of mass migration towards Europe are worrying. The recently announced **New Partnership Framework with third countries ties EU development aid to partner countries' cooperation in the management of migration.** This seems to run in contradiction with the essence of development cooperation as stated in Treaty of Lisbon. Moreover, the new approach could entail the diversion of European Development Fund resources towards projects pursuing security objectives. Priority should be given to long term investments that tackle the root causes of conflict and migration: inequalities and the lack of economic opportunities and political democracy to overcome them.

## Best practice: VNGi Municipal Assistance to Al Za'atari Refugee Camp and Local Governments in Al Mafraq Governorate

The Dutch Association of Municipalities (VNG) has sought to assist the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in designing an integrated spatial planning approach and a local participatory model for Za'atari refugee camp in northern Jordan.

Development planning and quick-win urban interventions were also identified in the Mafraq governorate where Za'atari camp is situated. The purpose was to address service bottlenecks created by the Syrian refugee influx in the host communities.

Finally, the project also aimed at assisting UNHCR in the incorporation of municipal expertise in the humanitarian response and, more generally, in rethinking how can local governments best contribute to humanitarian programmes.





## Tackling inequalities between territories through local economic development

Despite the progress that has been made (UNDP, 2013), **poverty alleviation continues to be one of the main challenges in the international development agenda**, as reflected by SDG1 on eradicating poverty. In low-income countries, local economic development strategies are a crucial instrument in this regard. Investments, however, need an enabling policy environment. This, in turn, requires capable and effective governments at all levels that can drive local policies in relation with the private sector, assure a safe investment climate (both financial, legal and physical) and guide private investment towards those economic activities offering the greatest societal benefits.

At the same time, when local and regional governments are empowered to coordinate local economic development, it can also help address the challenge of rising inequalities within countries. **Inequalities within and between territories are particularly significant in middle income countries.** In China for instance, regional inequalities explain the largest share of total inequality and the same goes for Brazil (Overseas Development Institute, 2004).

It is necessary to harness the potential of cities as a space that can foster sustainable growth, job creation, energy savings, sustainable consumption, and drive technological innovation. This however **needs all tiers of government and the private sector to align on shared objectives to decrease inequalities through building sustainable, resilient cities and correctly address the urban-rural divide.** Despite the recognition of such an approach in the New Urban Agenda (Habitat III) the EU should support private sector and governments alike to interact to this end.

Economic development has a strong local dimension because of the weight that Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have in a number of third countries as important contributors to economic activity and employment. In this sense, **local authorities' policies towards local businesses can have a significant impact when it comes to creating a more favourable investment environment**, facilitating the creation of jobs and promoting the local economic development of a territory. In collaboration with civil society and the private sector (i.e. cooperatives), local governments have to address the challenges posed by the informal economy: it creates economic opportunities for many but negatively affects public service delivery, financial sustainability and the democratic legitimacy of governments.

Priority should be given to endogenous growth, including the promotion of a national private sector that is able to invest in sustainable projects that create decent and lasting jobs sustainable jobs and contribute to social development. Support to private sector investment is important, but within the EU Development Policies the private sector must be assessed in the same way NGO, local and regional government and partner countries national governments are held accountable for the results of their interventions.

Simultaneously, it should be explicitly recognised that international trade impacts local economic development. In this regard, the EU, in line with the three dimensions of Policy Coherence for Development, should also evaluate and assess impact of trade agreements (particularly the Economic Partnership Agreements) on territories and local communities. This evaluation process **must allow for an active participation of civil society organisations and local governments**, through dialogue with their representative national or regional associations. Evaluations also need to be based on geographically disaggregated (localised) data in order to assess positive and negative impacts at the level of territories. This will help create a better understanding of development and inequalities within countries, thus allowing for a more accurate and precise monitoring of development achievements.

This is particularly relevant because **it is at the local level that the impacts of global processes, such as trade relations are felt**: both their direct effects on economic development, and their indirect impacts on local government functions (governance, infrastructure, service delivery, etc.) and society overall (social cohesion, wellbeing, etc.). It is particularly important that this aspect be enshrined in the new cooperation framework between the EU and ACP countries after 2020. Additionally, the EU must reaffirm its intention to exclude public services from free trade agreements in order not to impede local and regional governments' ability to organise, support, finance and deliver quality public services.

### **Good practice: Empowering local governments in Swaziland to drive local articulation of national economic strategies**

The Swaziland national Poverty Reduction Strategy and Action Plan identified decentralisation and strengthening governance institutions as a key priority. Bringing this policy choice into practice proved was not possible without local governments involved.

The Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) established a partnership with the Swaziland Local Government Association (SWALGA), the Local Authority Managers Association of Swaziland (LAMAS) and three urban authorities (Mbabane, Manzini and Matsapha) to engage with the national government. The goal of the partnership was to empower local governments and communities to identify their development priorities, to enhance the role of local government as a key agent in local economic empowerment and national development and eventually to increase the positive impact of public expenditure on lives of the poor.

The major innovation was recognising the critical enabling role local government can play in promoting inclusive social and economic development and accepting economic development as a cross-cutting issue of service delivery that can only be effective if it is inclusive.

The participating local governments undertook staff training and developed long term Local Economic Development strategies in which citizens, the business community and the informal traders when consulted. As part of these strategies skills training for community based labour and for small maintenance contractors were offered, income generation projects for unemployed youth and a recycling programme in support to informal traders launched. At neighbourhood level climate smart food gardens were installed.

In Mbabane a youth entrepreneurial programme targeting schools was introduced, a Public Transport Management Strategy developed, 1,107 individuals trained in sustainable environmental management and income generation, 894 Climate Smart Gardens established, 450 individuals capacitated in the production of commercial products using reusable waste material, 3,418 kg of compost produced and 4 dry sanitation model toilets constructed within 2 informal communities.

The experiences in Swaziland demonstrates that Local Economic Development offers a viable strategy for local authorities to bridge the often ambiguous gap between national policies and community needs on the ground. It also demonstrates how clear coordination between central government and local government leads to improved efficiencies and effectiveness in service delivery. It is a lesson to all that local authorities have a clear role to play in national development.

## Tackling gender inequalities with the local perspective

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development identifies gender equality (SDG5) as a stand-alone goal and as a cross-cutting issue. As it stands, women are grossly underrepresented in government institutions, including at the local level. It is imperative that a gender perspective (i.e. how policies can impact women and men differently) is mainstreamed in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of policies and budgets across all 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Empowered local and regional governments are best placed to identify inequalities in and between territories and therefore represent a reliable and effective partner for the implementation and delivery of SDG5. In order to properly monitor the effects of European Development Policy and the achievements of the 2030 Development Agenda (in particular SDG5), timely, reliable, and comparable data disaggregated by sex, age and geographical situation will be needed. Additionally, European Development Policy should take action to build the capacity of local governments and allocate financial resources for initiatives that focus on gender equality. Peer-to-peer exchanges with European municipalities should be included in the instruments offered.

Women's political and economic empowerment have been identified as key factors in reducing overall inequality and are preconditions for sustainable development. Women's inclusion in decision-making processes at the local level should be a key goal in all EU external actions.

In addition to the question of women's political and economic empowerment, EU development policy should focus efforts and increase cooperation with local and regional governments in the following areas with a gender dimension that fall within their duties and responsibilities: effective access to education for girls and women, access to land and finance, universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, a gender-sensitive built environment (infrastructure, transport, etc.) and public safety (preventing gender-based violence and protecting and providing assistance to survivors). Progress in these areas will contribute to the realisation of more resilient, sustainable, adaptable communities across the globe.

## Best practice: Triangular partnerships for gender equality, Isère-Tambacounda-Sint-Niklaas

The region of Isère in France has been involved in decentralised cooperation since 2004 and considers a gender-sensitive approach as indispensable in development projects. In 2011, the Family Planning division of Isère implemented a project to advance women's rights in the city of Tambacounda and town of Kedougou in Senegal where women and girls face challenges in accessing health care, education and are subject to gender-based violence.

Isère partnered with Senegalese women's rights organisations and the Committee to Fight Violence Against Women (CRLVF) to carry out specific actions including the renovation of three women's shelters in Tambacounda and the development of action plans to counter violence against women, including training for CRLVF members on methods for raising awareness about violence against women and girls among students and the general public.

The Belgian city Sint-Niklaas cooperates with the city of Tambacounda on public administration – registration of citizens in particular. Each year a joint campaign is launched to encourage citizens to register their children. In cooperation with national government an annual regularisation ('audience foraine') of not registered citizens is organised. The importance of registering girls is specifically emphasised in the campaigns as the formal birth certificates will give them access to education and health services later in their lives.



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 [platforma@ccre-cemr.org](mailto:platforma@ccre-cemr.org)