

Our 5 recommendations to strengthen the local dimension in the revised EU Consensus on Development

Since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, local and regional governments across the world have insisted that “All SDGs are local”. PLATFORMA, the European voice of local and regional governments for development, therefore **welcomes that the European Commission recognizes that “the achievements of most SDGs will depend on the active involvement of local authorities” (§69).**

Equally positive is that the Commission’s proposal for a revised European Consensus on Development calls for a **renewed support to decentralization reforms** in partner countries as a means to empower subnational governments as development actors. PLATFORMA calls to step-up efforts to support high-quality decentralisation in partner countries.

The document therefore is an important step forwards and a good basis to engage the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union.

However, PLATFORMA believes that the proposal is not quite innovative and ambitious enough compared to the global challenges. The European institutions must ensure that the role of subnational governments is recognised in practice across the board. Failing to do so would mean that the new Consensus will not address the essential preconditions to localise the Agenda 2030.

Local implementation of the global goals in Europe and in partner countries needs an enabling environment for accountable local and regional governments to take up their role as development actors¹.

PLATFORMA calls on the European institutions to include the following recommendations in an inter-institutional European Consensus on Development:

- If the European Union and its member states are serious about the key role of local and regional governments, they should involve them further in development policy making and programming. This promise cannot be hollow. The EU must increase capital investments in local governments infrastructure and **reaffirm its commitments and support to capacity building for local and regional governments** (§ 86) and to a **territorial approach to local development** that empower citizens through their accountable local governments. **These empowered local authorities should be granted an increased participation in policy making, joint programming and joint actions** (§ 59-63), greater **access to the governing structures** of the newly created EU Trust Funds (§ 64) and of the External Investment Plan (§ 65). The exact modalities should be based on an analysis of what hinders actual involvement of local governments in development policy making and uptake of European programs.
- To support the effective localisation of the global goals, the **new Consensus on Development should recognize the instrumental role the international actions of European local and regional governments** can play to empower their counterparts in partner countries. Decentralised cooperation has received support in the past, but never as part of strategic policy dialogues (at EU or partner countries level) or bilateral cooperation. As such, the EU has not fully tapped into the potential of local and regional governments international cooperation. In practice, decentralised cooperation already responds to the Sustainable Development Goals and (by definition) puts local and regional governments in the driving seat - two objectives voiced in the Commissions’ proposal.

¹ See PLATFORMA’s publication [“Tackling inequalities with the local and regional perspective”](#)

- In today's interconnected world, **Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) should not be limited to external policies**, such as humanitarian aid, climate change and trade, **but also be applicable across all domestic policies** (§ 87-89) and cross-over topics such as mobility and migration (§ 55-57). This would be coherent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a universal agenda. While this idea is reflected in the communication "Next Steps for a Sustainable European Future", it is not clearly exposed in the Communication on the Consensus.
- The EU must commit to **multiply the efforts on development education and awareness raising - and in particular support the contribution of local and regional governments** (in line with SDG 4.7). If the European Consensus on Development is to be successful, it must be also shared and supported by citizens. International sustainable development needs informed citizens and a private sector committed to contribute to sustainability and decent work (SDG 12). Due to their proximity to citizens and local businesses, local and regional governments across the world play an exclusive role in raising awareness and offering development education to mainstream sustainable lifestyles, for instance with the European Days of Local Solidarity.
- To evaluate the impact of EU external action at the local level the EU should commit to and invest in **gathering disaggregated data by territories** (§ 94-98). The impact of global trends and of EU external policies is felt at the local level. While the push to come up with SDG indicators to measure progress at country level is positive, it is also important that specific indicators have a disaggregated perspective to capture the reality on the ground. These indicators should be developed jointly by national and subnational authorities. In many EU and partner countries, local and regional governments will need additional capacities to take on this role.

The PLATFORMA network, representing more than 100.000 local governments, is ready to further contribute to the process of finetuning the commissions' proposal and to build on the important positive evolution in the recognition of local and regional governments as developmental actors in their own right. Clearly this uptake is one of the results of the framework partnership agreement signed between the European Commission and five representative networks of local governments, among which PLATFORMA.