

PLATFORMAMA's perspective on the New European Consensus on Development

What is the New Consensus on Development?

After months of negotiations, the European Union has adopted a new European Consensus on Development¹ that sets out a new framework for development cooperation for the EU and its Member States. The New Consensus is the EU's response to the adoption in 2015 of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Goals. The New Consensus defines the main principles that will guide the EU and its Member States' approach to development cooperation for the next 15 years as well as the strategy for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Consensus positions EU development policy as a key instrument to meet the priorities outlined in the EU's Global Strategy², refers to the objectives of EU development policy defined in the treaties and reaffirms some principles such as democracy, rule of law, human rights and gender equality.

The New Consensus recognises that the EU as well as its Member States cannot achieve the SDGs by themselves and need to better work with other stakeholders. It acknowledges the importance of several actors in the development field such as parliaments, political parties, regional and local governments, research institutions, philanthropic organisations, cooperatives, the private sector, and civil society organisations.

What the Consensus says about local governments

The New European Consensus on Development stresses that stronger partnerships should be at the heart of the SDGs' implementation. For local and regional governments, it recognises the key roles they should play, notably their scrutiny role, and actively participate in decision-making processes.

The Consensus rightly acknowledges that **most SDGs can only be achieved through an active involvement of local and regional governments**. With this reality in mind, the Consensus commits the EU and its Member States to support "transparency, accountability and decentralisation reforms, where appropriate, to **empower regional and local authorities** for better governance and development impact and better address **inequalities within countries**. They will support processes to help people interact effectively with local government at all stages of policy planning and implementation, and will strengthen their cooperation with local and other sub-national authorities, including through **decentralised cooperation**."

This approach reflects in what PLATFORMAMA called for in its publication "Fighting inequalities with the local and regional perspective. Revising the European Consensus on Development"³. As the European voice of local and regional governments that engage in international cooperation for sustainable

¹ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/05/pdf/European-consensus-on-development/>

² http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf

³ <http://platforma-dev.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/platforma-reaction-to-eu-consensus-dvpt-en.pdf>

development, PLATFORMA has notably been calling for stronger support for effective democratic governance at all levels. This attention to democratic governance is related to the necessity to reduce all inequalities. Inequalities can only be addressed through advanced governance capacities.

Does it stop here?

A successful partnership for the SDGs should imply the **integration of the local perspective in all sectors and levels of governments**. This would create the necessary pre-conditions to develop effective tools and strategies to achieve the SDGs. After all, local governments, through their proximity, are best placed to govern with citizens and **empower all stakeholders** to better address inequalities from the local level.

Local and regional governments should have the possibility to participate in the design and monitoring of global and regional development policies. To do this, their **capacities must be strengthened**, something that is not mentioned explicitly in the Consensus. To be effective, decentralisation reforms should be accompanied by capacity building efforts. For this, direct cooperation between European local and regional governments and their peers in EU partner countries is the most effective approach.

The European Union and its member states will now move towards putting the principles of the Consensus into practice. The existing framework partnerships with associations of local and regional governments should be an essential building block to guarantee that implementation is at par with the ambitions and is tailored to unlock the potential of the local governments to reach sustainable development. The practice of multi-stakeholder engagement at the territorial level will thus be included as self-evident.

In line with its commitments, it is to be expected that the EU will promote the creation of enabling conditions for local and regional governments to thrive and take on their role as key developmental actor. This would include support to territorial and administrative reforms that provide LRGs with competences, capacities and the necessary means to carry out their mandate.

PLATFORMA will continue to advocate for the implementation of the principles mentioned above in future EU policies and strategies and will continue to collaborate with the European institutions to make the local government perspective, specificity and priorities clear so to include them as intrinsic part of the future of Europe's development policies.