



Integrated Territorial Partnerships and the SDGs: How to « leave no one behind » Seminar conclusions

The seminar ***“Integrated territorial partnerships and the SDGs: How to leave no one behind”*** (14th June, venue: Basque Government Delegation to the European Union- Brussels) examined how local and regional governments, through territorial partnerships and decentralised cooperation initiatives, contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and hence to the economic development, social cohesion and environmental protection of their communities. Under the joint coordination of the Basque Government, the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR), PLATFORMA, and ART Initiative-Hub for Territorial Partnerships of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the seminar gathered representatives of regional and local governments from across the globe and their associations, as well as high level officials from the European Commission, the UNDP and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The objective of the seminar was to exchange among a wide range of stakeholders the practical aspects of how Territorial Partnerships and Decentralised Cooperation contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and hence to sustainable human development at the regional and local levels.

1. Context

Local and regional governments: Crucial actors in the new global sustainable development framework - The new global framework for development policy - the so-called 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted last September 2015 by Heads of State and Government and world leaders gathered at an United Nations Summit. The Agenda encompasses 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 related targets with the overarching aims of ending poverty, combatting inequality, and fighting climate change in the horizon of 2030. Among them, SDG11 “To Make Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable” and SDG 16 “To promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.” The 2030 Agenda provides tools to achieve the SDGs; recognises the role of local and regional governments in their implementation and encourages partnerships among local, national and international actors.



Led by the Basque Country, at its 2015 General Assembly, the 180 member regions of the **Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR)** adopted the **Position Paper** “Decentralised Cooperation and the Regional Dimension in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”¹

The growing responsibilities of LRGs in local and national public policies and the common understanding of the impact of their external action, position LRGs as critical partners towards the achievement of sustainable human development. Many are the local and regional governments deeply engaged in the discussions about their role in the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of the global agenda. For decades, local and regional governments (LRGs) have been playing a very active part in the landscape of development cooperation; an area that represents a remarkable important tool for the implementation of the SDGs. Territorial partnerships, through technical exchanges and mutual capacity building, have proven to be essential to enhance public service delivery, local governance, and local economic development in both the Global South and North.

As it was demonstrated throughout the Global Dialogues led by the UN Development Group during the elaboration of the 2030 Agenda and is now enshrined in this new global framework; LRGs, together with other stakeholders such as civil society organizations, academia and private sector, must be placed at the centre of the SDGs subnational implementation.

The Basque Country’s experience in pioneering Policy Coherence for Development - Policy coherence for development (PCD) in the interest of advancing sustainable human development policies with increased effectiveness and accountability is a challenge for all levels of governments and administrations. The Basque Government is publicly committed to promoting government action to address this challenge. In this context, the Basque approach adopts PCD as a guiding principle for policy-making and as a formula for operationalising solutions both at the local and international levels.

Led by the **Basque Country Development Cooperation Agency** and approved by the Basque Government’s Council, the **Basque Policy Coherence Framework**, enshrines the commitment of all government departments to pursuing PCD in response to the Goals and Targets of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. The Basque government is also committed to sharing its ongoing experience in the implementation of this PCD framework in the hope that it can facilitate the work of other regional and local governments, as well as of the European Union institutions.

The support of the European Union and the UN Development Programme to Decentralised Cooperation - As part of its external action, the European Union, mostly through the European Commission, provides crucial support for decentralised and cross-border cooperation among local and regional governments both in EU member states and partner countries.

The European Commission’s Communication “Empowering Local Authorities in partner countries for enhanced governance and more effective development outcomes” recognises

¹ http://www.cprm.org/pub/docs/448_en-cprm-position-2030agendasd.pdf



LRGs as genuine actors of development cooperation and, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, as key partners towards good governance and sustainable development.

The 2013 Communication underlines that decentralised cooperation between EU LRGs and their counterparts in third countries brings added value to the implementation of development actions, through continuous peer-to-peer learning, transfer of know-how and enhancement of local actors' participation in the public space at local level. It also calls on European LRGs to bring together their expertise to engage in more systematic cooperation activities, in order to enhance the impact of this cooperation at local level, in respect of the principles of aid and development effectiveness. Finally it affirms that support to decentralised cooperation “*needs to be based on a clear and sound partnership and have at its core the key commitments of aid effectiveness that underpin good development programmes including on avoiding fragmentation.*”

The approach of the UN Development Programme to local governance and local development - UNDP operates in nearly 170 countries, helping to achieve the eradication of poverty, and the reduction of inequalities and exclusion. It helps countries and territories to develop policies, leadership skills, partnering abilities, institutional capabilities and build resilience in order to sustain development results.

UNDP is deeply involved in all processes around the Sustainable Development Goal deployment and specifically, in supporting the implementation at the local level i.e. the localisation of the SDGs. As we have learned from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), if the new development framework wants to respect its commitments and be truly transformative – an Agenda “of the people, for the people, and by the people” – it needs to be implemented and fully realised at the local level. Therefore, the localisation of the new agenda, a process that envisages an effective landing of the SDGs into practices at the local level, will be the only way to have a concrete and positive impact on people's lives.

In this context, UNDP, through its network of 1000 + local development partners and in coordination with UN Habitat and the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Government for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, is accompanying the construction of a global alliance for SDGs localization, and the participatory elaboration of a toolbox for SDG localization.

In March 2016 the UNDP presented its new integrated approach to local governance and local development² that will guide coordination and action on the ground and responds to the challenges related to “localising the 2030 Agenda.” This approach, connected to SDGs localization, builds on more than 10 years of experience implementing Local Governance and Local Development country programmes in more than 30 countries to provide a strategic, multilevel and multi-stakeholder framework for SDGs localization.

² http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/local_governance/integrated-framework-to-support-local-governance-and-local-devel.html



PLATFORMA, the European voice of Local and Regional Authorities for Development -

PLATFORMA is the network of local and regional governments and their associations, active in the field of development cooperation between Europe and partner countries. PLATFORMA has 34 members: national, European and international associations, as well individual local and regional governments. The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) host its Secretariat.

Since its creation in 2008, PLATFORMA has actively engaged with the European institutions to inform and constructively participate in shaping the EU development policy with two main objectives; (a) strengthening EU support for local governance in partner countries and, (b) strengthening EU support for decentralised cooperation as a means to implement development cooperation. As such, Platforma actively contributed to the drafting of the 2030 Agenda³.

In 2015, PLATFORMA signed a Strategic Partnership with the European Commission Directorate-General for International Development and Cooperation, committing to take actions based on common values and objectives to tackle global poverty and inequality, and to promote democracy and sustainable development.

2. Seminar programme and background documents

- Programme of the seminar:
http://www.irekia.euskadi.eus/uploads/attachments/8284/Integrated_Territorial_Partnerships_and_the_SDGs_-_DEF_Agenda.pdf?1466429113
- Citizen-based monitoring of development cooperation to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda, Development Cooperation Forum Policy Brief.
- Decentralised cooperation and the regional dimension in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, CPMR Policy Position.
- El rol estratégico de los territorios y de la cooperación descentralizada en la Agenda de Desarrollo Post-2015, Revista Española n.37.
- Integrated Framework to Support Local Governance and Local Development, United Nations Development Programme.
- Monitoring and review of development cooperation at the local level, Development Cooperation Forum Policy Brief.
- Report of the Dialogues on Localizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda, United Nations Development Group.

2. Some quotes from seminar speakers

“What is new with the SDGs? You need to get local or you go out of business”: **Ms Rosario Bento Pais**, Head of Civil Society, Local Authorities, DG International Cooperation and Development and (DEVCO), European Commission.

³ http://platforma-dev.eu/event.php?parent_id=19&page_id=229



“Multilevel dialogue can be a concrete way to show that when local authorities have a dialogue at national and international level, they become more aware of the problems and of the role they can play in solving them”: PLATFORMA representative, **Ms Flavia Donati**, Director of Partnerships and International Cooperation in Tuscany Region

“With Agenda 2030, the overarching aim of policy coherence forces a cultural change in our institutions, from an approach of isolated projects to coherent strategies for multi stakeholder decentralised cooperation initiatives”: **Mr Paul Ortega**, Director the Development Cooperation Agency of the Basque Country, and CPMR External Cooperation Working Group Leader.

“In a changing social and political environment, such as Tunisia, it is an imperative for regional governments to serve citizens with efficiency and accountability”: **Ms Ikbel Kerkeni**, Director of International Cooperation, Sousse Governorate, Tunisia

3. Take away messages and conclusions

Roundtable 1 “Territorial Approaches to SDGs implementation: Fostering Coherence, Effectiveness and Accountability”

Moderator: Ms Eleni Marianou, Secretary General, CPMR

Speakers:

Mr Jorge Rodríguez Bilbao - Quality Manager, Unit B “civil society, local authorities”, DG DEVCO, European Commission

Ms Aziza Akhmouch - Head of Water and Governance Programme, Regional development policy division, OECD

Mr Paul Ortega - Director, Development Cooperation Agency, Basque Country

Ms Silvia Grandi, Head, Department Coordination of European Policies, Agreements and Special Area Programs, Emilia-Romagna Region

This first roundtable brought together four actors that are critically reassessing their way of working in view of the 2030 Agenda and in a conscious effort to include different forms of interaction from the local level. Multilateral institutions such as OECD and European Commission are reviewing their relation to local development actors while subnational governments are recalibrating their policy coherence along the 2030 Agenda SDGs, taking up the challenge of the universality of these global goals.

The governments of Emilia Romagna and the Basque country specifically focused on how the SDG framework and a tradition in territorial partnerships between Europe and partner countries can be central to increasing policy coherence for development.

Under the banner of ‘*intermestic action*’ the Basque Government policy on policy coherence puts the international dimension at the core of the 2030 strategy while also recognizing that the issue can not only be responsibility of the international cooperation agency. In this effort the Basque international action is shifting from assistance logic to cooperation as a core strategy of government, with clear political objectives.



OECD shared its efforts to better define what ‘the local’ means in the 2030 Agenda and to articulate disaggregated data to monitor progress. The measurement will be focusing on functional areas, not administrative boundaries. Additionally the organization envisages to identify where trade-offs between different SDGs and between different tiers of governments’ interventions are made. The combination of these data will be very informative to see how SDGs are localized and how that impacts their implementation.

Likewise the European Commission is recalibrating its support to local and regional governments in partner countries. Recognizing that most global goals will be implemented as part of local governments work, direct support to local and regional governments will be complemented with country specific decentralisation efforts – including assessment of the quality of formal decentralization. The Territorial Approach to Local Development (TALD) is a framework that will focus attention to explicit and hidden local aspects of EU development action – and as such will increase active support to the local government actors in partner countries.

Overall the roundtable made clear that localizing the 2030 Agenda is not so much about where change happens. It is about how it happens and who is driving change. Local and regional governments, it was generally accepted, have a central role to play in the Agenda – as is their international action. International cooperation between subnational levels of government can inform policy coherence efforts, trigger innovation and push institutional learning if and when it is organized along multi-actor AND multi-level partnerships. In this regard a proposal to form a European Alliance for SDG local action was raised. As such it will confirm an ongoing evolution within decentralized cooperation from project implementation (one-off) to policy design and political dialogue.

Panel 2 - “Vertical And Horizontal Coordination For SDGs implementation: Achieving Multi-level Governance And Cross-sectoral Solutions”

Moderator: Mr Sébastien Vauzelle – UNDP ART

Speakers:

Mr Carles Llorens - Secretary General, ORU-FOGAR

Ms Ikbel Kerkeni - Director, International Cooperation, Sousse Region

Ms Flavia Donati - Director, Partnerships And International Cooperation, Tuscany Region | PLATFORMA Representative

Mr. Santiago Gallo – Representative of the National Confederation of Municipalities of Brazil
FLACMA

This second panel allowed to contextualise the discussion on the implementation of the SDGs and to highlight the great consensus to be found regarding methodologies.

On the one hand, the speakers noted the different aspects that must be taken into account when implementing the SDGs:

➤ **The territorial context:**

- The aspects of the territories are a determining factor. The terms and the different levels of the administration (local, departmental, regional, national, federal, etc.) differ from one



country to the other and mean that territorial governance and the national-regional-local link must be analysed in their context.

- Both the Sousse (Tunisia) and the Brazilian representatives highlighted the importance of territorial disparities: the uprising of the overlooked regions triggered the Tunisian democratic revolution and a distinction should be made between the reality of Northern Brazil and that of Southern Brazil. These disparities are down to huge socio-economic inequalities, which is a reminder that sustainable development is about equitable development.
- The specificity of each territory is furthermore an important asset. The system of cooperation agents set up by the Tuscany region articulate the institutional level (public institutions) and that of civil society (NGO and associations, and also economic stakeholders and trade unions). In fact, this system has only served to reflect the traditional cooperation culture between these two levels, which have been the two main drivers of development in the region.

➤ **The main political trends:**

- Brazil is currently immersed in a serious political crisis, with political, social and economic root causes. The Tunisian case recalls how important it is for territorial governance to be part of a real democratization framework founded on participation and transparency.
- A shift has likewise been observed in many Latin American countries, which has led to a transition from a “developmentalist” model to a more liberal model.
- ORU-FOGAR stressed the current recentralising trend fostered by the economic crisis, both in Latin America and in Europe. In many countries, in spite of the recognition of the role of the regions regarding development which has occurred in recent years, regions have found themselves deprived of resources and their budgets have shrunk. Should the trend continue, there will be undeniable pervasive consequences for SDGs implementation.

On the other hand, the panel showed that the organisations and networks present share the same vision regarding methodology:

- Rigorous analysis of the needs and resources of territories, as well as of their disparities.
- Identification of the key stakeholders, whose capacities should be strengthened.
- Structured dialogues between central government and regional & local governments and on international cooperation.
- Vertical and horizontal coordination of the different institutional levels.
- Setting up or consolidating partnerships, particularly internationally.
- Pooling and capitalisation of good practices or “toolkits”, particularly as part of networks or structured programmes, such as those established by the UNDP.
- Setting up indicator monitoring systems.

Discussions also showed that there should be greater reflection from a sectoral perspective, insofar as that a single approach is clearly not adapted to all sectors and the SDGs should not be seen as an agenda where all the levels intervene in the same way in all sectors.